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JESUS ONLY
AND OTHER SERMONS

JESUS ONLY

And Other Sermons

BY THE LATE

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FOREWORD

THIS small selection from the sermons of the late Rev. Donald John Martin is issued at the urgent desire of admiring friends. We believe that there are a great many, to whom Mr Martin's memory is dear, who will rejoice to have even this small volume by them to remind them of a ministry to which, under God, they owe their souls.

It will be remembered, of course, that these sermons were not written with a view to publication in any form—they were written solely for Mr Martin's own eye and use, and were no doubt amplified at various points in the course of delivery. Excellent as they are in their present form, their value would have been enhanced if they could have been prepared for the press and issued at his own hand. He would have given them a literary finish and grace all his own.

It was seldom difficult for any one to get into personal intercourse with Mr Martin, and even casual intercourse seldom failed to arouse interest; but it was reserved for those who had the privilege of extended and intimate fellowship with him to discover the exquisite charm of his personal qualities. To all such there was only one Martin—a great soul, a master mind, a powerful preacher. Without any conscious effort he created an atmosphere which was charged with evangelical fervour and spiritual power. His great personality threw out subtle influences which captivated our affection, and bound us to him with a fondness that became enthusiastic. He was so human, and as a matter of course, he had his limitations; but strange as it may

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seem, we loved him all the more because of his limitations. He was passionately evangelical and spiritual, and so he brought Christ and heaven near to us, and made the exercise of Christian privilege so natural and so real. To hear Martin pray to his heavenly Father, in the stillness of the small hours of the morning, in bodily distress, is an experience never to be forgotten. The memory of it comes as a reviving stimulus when the shadows oppress a staggering faith, and as a holy impetus when adverse circumstances benumb the heart's energy.

It is not necessary to dwell on the obvious excellencies of these sermons—their heavenly message and cumulative power; their cogent argument and luminous style; their vigorous thinking and elevated tone; their breadth of view and directness of appeal. The crucified and reigning Christ was for Mr Martin the centre of the only true system of theology; the balm for all sorrow, and the solving medium for all life's problems; the one gospel for the lost, and the one ideal for the Christian.

Miss Mary Martin has put hosts of her saintly father's spiritual children and admirers under a lasting obligation by putting within their reach a volume which will be to them a sweet reminder of days of high privilege under his ministry, and the general reader by giving him a selection of sermons which will speak to him of the loving heart of God—so tender, so gracious so abounding in its liberality.

MALCOLM MACLENNAN.

EDINBURGH, 1915.

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I

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“They saw no man save Jesus only.”—MAT. xvii. 8.

WITH these words Matthew closes his account of the Transfiguration scene. The transfiguration of our Lord must be viewed as it is in the Gospels, given us in connection with, and following shortly after, His announcement of His coming sufferings and death. The shadow of the Cross had already fallen on our Lord; He had begun to enter the darkness; and as afterwards, when that darkness most thickly enveloped Him, He retired into the garden with His three choice disciples, so now He retired with the same three to spend the night in prayer upon the mountain top. (Luke tells us that it was as He prayed that He was transfigured.) And as then so now, whilst He prayed the three slept. The first end of the Transfiguration glory was the strengthening of Jesus Himself. It formed to Him a foretaste of the glory that awaited Him beyond His sufferings and death;

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it assured Him of the interest and sympathy of heaven, and above all it conveyed to Him the assurance of His heavenly Father's favour and approval. But it was meant also to bring lessons to the disciples, and through them to us. To such we would specially turn this evening.

The passage from law to grace—the putting of Jesus in place of Moses and Elias. They saw Moses and Elias with their Master in glory. Now Moses and Elias had vanished, and they were left alone with Jesus. Moses and Elias were the representatives of law and wrath; they and their ministries had been needful—had discharged a function—but they had found their fulfilment in Jesus. Whilst not coming to destroy the law and the prophets, Jesus had come to fulfil and so to supersede them—to be their fulfilment and more. The disciples, two of them at least, had been disciples of John Baptist, the great preacher of repentance, the last of the prophets of law and wrath, and they still carried with them into their following of Jesus a good deal of their old legality; they had not come into the full freedom of the Son of Man. This vision was meant to break them off forever from their old discipleship, and make them out and out followers of Jesus. Henceforth Jesus only was to be before them as the one fountain-head of authority; Jesus was to take the place of Moses and Elias; they were henceforth to be under grace not law. So Paul writes to the Roman Christians telling them that

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those who are Christ's are not under law but under grace. All law has been fulfilled in Jesus—all wrath has been put away in Him; henceforth we are to see Jesus only. He is our law fulfiller, and He is our rule of life. We, as the three on the mount, are left alone with Jesus; He is the one salvation; He is the one authority.

The walk of faith and obedience amidst normal conditions. They had seen the Lord in His glory. They had had in this experience a foretaste of heaven; yet only for a short season. It was not to be the rule of their life. Peter would fain have stayed on the mount—have made the Christian life one entirely of rapt devotion and spiritual enjoyment. But that was not to be the normal Christian life. The glorious vision with all its spiritual upliftment vanished, and they had to come back once more to the commonplace realities of life in its normal form. They were left alone with Jesus. They were to live not by vision or extraordinary upliftings but by daily fellowship with Jesus.

How prone we are still to live by frames and feelings, and spiritual upliftings, and extraordinary vision of heavenly things! We, too, would be always on the mount, far up and away from all the toils and struggles, and weariness, and worry of contact with the things and the men and the women of this world. Other-worldliness would be our choice. But this is not the form of the

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Christian life. The Christian life here, like the earthly life of our Lord, is to be lived amidst earthly conditions and surroundings. It is thus one to be regulated not by vision but by faith and obedience and simple following of our Lord. It may often thus, like His, be one of temptation, and trial, and toil. As one has said, Peter and his companions were dreaming of crowns when they should have been thinking of crosses. We would all of us common mortals, no doubt, like to have aeroplanes to soar with, or cars to race along with, but we have the most of us to content ourselves with the safer, if the more modest and humble, way of walking this earth. So spiritually. We often, like Peter, would wish for the heights and flights of spiritual and unusual uplifting, and we even envy those who claim to enjoy such; but the lesson of the mount is, that we should be happy if we can walk and live out our Christian faith in a daily, quiet, and sober following of Jesus, amidst commonplace surroundings and duties. If we have transfiguration experiences given to us, let us not for ourselves or others make them the rule. Paul tells us of an extraordinary experience of his own—of his being caught up into the third heaven, and of his hearing things that were not for ordinary utterance, yet that he gloried not in this extraordinary experience, but rather in the daily toils and trials of his life in his following of Christ and the doing of His will. "Most gladly," says he, "will I rather glory in my infirmities—therefore

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I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake, for when I am weak then am I strong." We must learn to live not by moods and experience, but by faith in Jesus Himself. Jesus must take the place not only of Moses and Elias—of outward law and penalty—but the place of vision and experiences. He is even above His own glory, nay, His preciousness for us rests not merely on the glory of His divinity, but on the truth and reality of His human nature and experience. I may not have any visions or experiences to boast of, but if I have Jesus Himself as my Lord and Master, that is the essential and the sufficient thing. The Christian life is one of principle, abiding, constant. "This one thing I do," says Paul. "To me to live is Christ." And it is a practical one. The devotional side may be its depository and power, but its outcome is action.

One of the great mistakes of mediæval piety was its excessive stress on the devotional life; it made the cloister life the ideal one; other forms were to be tolerated; this alone to be extolled. Hence an ecstatic form of piety within the cloister, a very defective one outside. Of course there were exceptions. St Francis of Assisi's life, that most beautiful of all mediæval lives, was not a mere cloister one but one of active endeavour. It owes its beauty to its singleness of aim, namely, its endeavour to reproduce, especially

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in its self-denying features, the life of our Lord. St Francis may truly be said to have seen no one save Jesus only, so far as aim and endeavour were concerned, yet his devoted life was conceived and carried out within the limits of mediævalism. A better instance it seems to us is found in the case of the great Dr Livingstone. He was no saint in the mediæval sense. His religious experience had nothing of the exalted or ecstatic about it; indeed, his religious reticence was one of his marked characteristics. His diaries give us no ecstasies—no mountain-top experiences. Yet was there ever one who walked more closely with his God, or gave himself more devotedly to the cause of the Kingdom of God among men? His diary contains no ecstasies, but it does contain repeated consecrations of himself and his life to God and Christ. He heard the voice of Jesus and he obeyed its call, and in his whole life-work he sought not fame, or riches, or applause—he “saw no man save Jesus only.”

So for salvation, for authority, for rule of conduct and life aim, we, too, are called to see no man save Jesus only. Qualms of conscience and sense of misdoing and failure may await us; standards of faith and conduct, man-made, conventional, partial, or false, may claim their authority over us; considerations of ease or worldly advancement may tempt us aside from the path of self-sacrificing duty; in all these cases safety and sure guidance and strength for

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true service are found in our seeing no man save
Jesus only.

“What though clouds are hov’ring o’er me,
And I seem to walk alone—
Longing ’midst my cares and crosses
For the joys that now are flown !
If I’ve Jesus, Jesus only,
Then my sky shall have a gem ;
He’s the sun of brightest splendour,
And the star of Bethlehem.

“What though all my earthly journey
Bringeth nought but weary hours ;
And, in grasping for life’s roses,
Thorns I find instead of flowers !
If I’ve Jesus, Jesus only,
I possess a cluster rare :
He’s the ‘Lily of the Valley’
And the ‘Rose of Sharon’ fair.”

II

CHRIST CRUCIFIED

“We preach Christ crucified.”—I COR. i. 23.

DR WATSON of Liverpool, in his farewell sermon to his people, tells us how forty years ago as he heard a preacher “declare boldly that no one could be saved by any doctrine, and that the only saviour of the soul was Christ Himself, who was alive and present among them,” how “as the stranger spoke he saw the stone rolled away from the grave, and the living Christ came forth, and within his soul he heard Him call him by name, who was not worthy to be His disciple far less His minister.” It was the proper presentation of the personal Christ which won Dr Watson. So it was in Paul’s day. Paul in his life-work had two great types of mind to deal with, aptly represented by the Jew and the Greek. These men’s ideals were very much opposite, though they both created a prejudice against the Gospel; yet in the long run the Gospel won. The Jew represented the type of religious pride and prejudice, the man

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of settled beliefs and strong fanatical prejudices. The Greek represented the type of cultured intellectual pride and prejudice, the man of no very settled beliefs of any kind, and who dislikes any such in any one else, deeming them a sign, not of intellectual strength, but of weakness. Now Paul came pleasing neither class, and yet winning converts from both. How did he do this? By preaching Christ—Christ crucified; as Robertson of Brighton puts it, "*Christ as Christianity: Christ His own evidence.*" These two types still exist amongst us, both difficult of access, yet to be reached by the preaching of Christ crucified.

I. Consider the two types of opposition to the Gospel.

1. *Religious prejudice.* It has always been the tendency of religions to become stereotyped and external. This applies to Gentile religions as distinguished from the Jewish. It is that that oftentimes renders it difficult to know what exactly were the elementary positions of these religions; for some, such as Buddhism, which were seemingly in their beginnings a revolt against all ritual, have in the process of time become a huge system of rites and externals, which well-nigh obliterate whatever of moral or spiritual truth was there at the outset.

So Judaism, the Jewish religion, which had its origin in a very special and distinct consciousness of God, with very little if any ritual at all, developed into a most elaborate system of ritual observance,

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and lost its primitive simplicity and deep spirituality. Within the professedly Christian Church this tendency has also shown itself. Roman Catholicism and High Anglicanism are developments in this ritualistic, external, mechanical fashion, and even we of the Free Churches have not by any means escaped the taint of this tendency. Our Church life has become to a great extent mechanical and stereotyped. Hence a type of mind very much akin to the Jewish—a type retaining the warmth and fervour begotten of an initial time of deep, earnest, spiritual life, but a fervour which spends itself in the retaining of forms of expressed belief and of stereotyped Church life. This intensity often exhibits itself in very great narrowness and prejudice, which cannot bear anything that seems to run counter to old cherished views or customs, the spirit which made Paul's audience at the very mention of the Gentiles fly into a fury, and cry out, "Away with such a fellow from the earth, for it is not fit that he should live." This temper is a tremendous barrier to the simple Gospel, for it always demands something over and above the Gospel, viz., conformity to a particular type. It may not exist in this extreme form, and yet it may prove a great barrier notwithstanding—that temperament which rests content with a mere Church connection, and with conformity to all external Church observances, and accepting of Church creeds, and cannot see the need of anything further. As the Jew of old

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said, "Am I not a Jew?" and thought that that settled everything, so this modern Christian Jew says, "Am I not a Christian—a member of a Christian Church, and is not that enough?" This type cannot at times endure to hear of the need of conversion; the very name is at times an offence to them. It may be all very well and all needed by heathen or those who live loose, careless lives, but as for them and the like of them such is not needed. Conversion is an offence to them. It is not, note, that they are irreligious; far from it. They may be very religious and put religion in the place of Christ Himself. How could a Jew accept as the Messiah the man whom the leaders of his nation condemned as a heretic? How could he humble himself to become the disciple of the despised Nazarene? In a word they are externalists. So pride stepped in to strengthen prejudice.

2. *Philosophical prejudice.* The other type of mind which we may call after Paul, the Grecian, is almost the opposite of this and is sometimes a reaction from it, though again it often happens that extremes meet. Ritualism promotes rationalism, as a refuge from externalism, and rationalism often reacts into Romanism or ritualism as an escape from scepticism and consequent unrest.

The very thing this type of mind lacks is, to begin with, intensity—moral and spiritual earnestness of any kind. Its characteristic is that of indifference to any fixity of creed or conduct.

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It advocates a certain sweet reasonableness as against dogma or definite doctrine of any kind. The supernatural it views with suspicion as savouring of the unreal and superstitious. Its ideal is not spiritual, or heavenly, or even religious—its ideal is to make the best of this world which we are in, leaving all other considerations as at least irrelevant and to be dealt with only as they arise, which may never be. Any religion which this type of mind may wish to take on will be more a philosophy than a religion—more of an attempt to account for things as they are rather than a reaching forth towards any ideal future, or the worship of anything higher than the order of things as they are. It leads its possessor to stand aloof from all systems of religion—from all churches or creeds. *Philosophically* it is agnostic; its worship at best, as that of the Athenians, is of the Unknown God. Practically it is *hedonistic*—its ideal is earthly pleasure—if it be not with certain men of strong moral and spiritual natures *pessimistic*—its outcome despair—for in Greece it gave rise to these two types, the Epicurean and the Stoic, as it does still in our day. In the political world it gives us a Rosebery, a Morley—Rosebery a statesman of the Epicurean type, having an aristocratic horror of definiteness of creed or strenuousness of action—the apostle of what he calls efficiency—Morley of the Stoical type, of high ideal, calling out for driving power.

In our religious life it is telling very adversely

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to anything like moral and spiritual earnestness. Why are so many outside the Church and its services, let alone its ordinances? Is it not because of a prevalent indifference to spiritual realities? The impression has gone abroad, whether true or not, that the Church herself has, in great measure, lost hold of these, that at least she does not hold them as once she held them, and the three divisions of our Lord's day seem to be repeated when we have the Pharisees or orthodox who hold by everything down to the very minutiae of creed and conduct, the Sadducees who hold by nothing, and the multitude who, belonging to neither section, give themselves to making the best of the present life—of things as they are.

Why again the reluctance of many of our young people to join themselves openly to the Church in full communion? Is it not due to the intrusion of the same kind of spirit?

II. *What is the one power by which to overcome these two obstacles? "Christ Crucified."*

I. Let us note WHAT Paul preached: "Christ crucified."

He preached a PERSONAL Saviour—CHRIST. He preached a person. He did not preach a religion—a system of observances or of beliefs (these might follow) but he preached Christ—crucified, risen, reigning. He claimed heart and life for HIM, not for any system. Everything gathered round that centre. The great thing was to be in right relation to HIM.

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He preached a REDEEMER—"Christ crucified." He preached Christ in His dying love, in the atoning efficacy of His death for us. He emphasised the very point which seemed to give most offence to both Jew and Greek—what the one did not feel his need of, and which the other did not understand.

2. Let us note WHY the preaching of Christ crucified had such power.

It was because *it emphasised common facts*. After all, Jews and Greeks, however else they differed and were miles apart, were alike men. The human race is very wonderful both in its diversities and its unities. But as we said on a late Sabbath it is in our Lord that the unity of the race is expressed: *Its unity of nature*. To preach Christ is to preach the unity of the race as to the possession of a common nature. *Its unity of calamity*. Christ's cross emphasises both the facts of sin and sorrow. *Its unity of aspiration*. All races and nations have in their own sometimes very blind way groped after God and immortality. Christ has revealed both—brought both to light.

It was because *it met common needs*. Men as men desire the unity and fellowship of their kind. After all there is that in man that leads him to desire the breaking down of the barriers, whatever they may be, between himself and his kind. This is found in Jesus Christ.

But more: Men as men found fellowship and friendship in the person of Jesus Christ—in the

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man Christ Jesus. Man needs friendship, and the highest form of all is found in the fellowship and friendship of Jesus, and this friend they found to be God. The incarnation has its attractive power to men as men and as men seeking God, but God in their own nature. As the poet represents David as saying or rather singing to Saul :

“’Tis the weakness in strength that I cry for, my flesh
that I seek

In the Godhead ! I seek and I find it, O Saul it shall be
A face like my face that receives thee ; a man like to me,
Thou shalt love and be loved by forever ; a hand like this
hand

Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee ! See the
Christ stand !”

Men as sinners desire the assurance of sin forgiven and of reconciliation. Man, Gentile as well as Jew, has ever sought to propitiate Deity. In all other religions, save Christianity, there is a very marked unrest on this point, witnessed to by the oft-repeated sacrifices and rites resorted to for the appeasing of Deity and the attainment of a sense of forgiveness and peace. There is no finality in any of these religions in dealing with the sense of sin. The offerings which they offered day by day and year by year could never take away sin. But the Cross of Christ marks finality, and hence it proclaims the putting away of sin, and the giving of complete forgiveness and peace. “We have peace with God.” The sense of sin is deeper than any outward form and ritual can

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reach, and raises questions which no philosophy can really answer save the philosophy of the Cross ; but the Cross of Christ answers the questionings of both conscience and intellect. Man as made in God's image needs the knowledge of God and of immortality. Christ has brought both God and immortality to light.

These are some of the secrets of the power of the preaching of "Christ crucified." It meets the case of the weary and heavy-laden, of the hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and God and eternal life, and to all such it becomes the power of God and the wisdom of God. We are not surprised then to find that it won most of its converts among the poor and the humble, and the sinful, in Corinth. The Apostle, in the sixth chapter, after enumerating some of the most flagrant kinds of sinners, says : "And such were some of you ; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God." It was Christ's own experience repeated over again. So it is still. Jesus calls the sinful, the sorrowful, the weary, the lost, to Himself. The religiously or intellectually proud find no voice to which they can yield, but the humble and the sinful do. Christ has no message for pride—religious or intellectual—but a humbling one. The haughty he casts down, the humble he uplifts.

And this is the preaching that will heal and bind up our divisions. It is it that bridges over

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men's differences. I do not know that there is a better proof of a real Gospel ministry than its power to attract and unite men of diverse minds and character. Nothing was more striking in connection with the retirement of Dr Watson of Liverpool than the way in which men of otherwise diverse views united in paying tribute to him. The reason of this is, no doubt, that he kept to the lesson of his own conversion, and tried to teach and preach nothing but Christ and Him crucified. I find the same thing exemplified in the case of General Booth, and in connection with the conference held in Dr Horton's in London I see the same thing. Christ meets the common needs of men, which are after all their great needs, and as He draws men to Himself, and as they find in Him their centre, so are they drawn to one another.

III

STEPS INTO THE LIGHT

"Dost thou believe on the Son of God?"—JOHN ix. 35.

THE miracles of Christ as recorded in John are always connected with, and illustrative of, some great truth regarding the person of our Lord. The miracle of John v. 1, etc., illustrates the truth of Jesus as the Life. This of John ix. as the Light of the World.

It is a beautiful narrative of the fruits of obedience and fidelity to light received, resulting in arrival at full and perfect day. You may take it as illustrative of the Old Testament saying that, "the path of the just is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Prov. iv. 18). We might entitle it "Steps into the Light."

You see here at the outset how wisely the Lord dealt with the problems of sin and suffering. He refused to go behind the scene and enter into questions and theories of origin; He took and treated facts as He found them. Here was a

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sufferer; the first duty was to relieve him—a blind man; the part of love was to give him sight.

The first step towards light was *obedience*. Christ's first act was to plaster the man's eyes with clay; a strange way, by appearance, to give a man his sight. To the man it must have been both a test of his faith and a help towards it. A test, because this act only seemed to add, if that were possible, to his blindness—to make the blind still blinder; yet, on the other side of it, it was a pledge that he was in the hands of the Healer, and however strange the process might seem to him, his faith in the Healer would lead him to believe that all was for the best, and that, in a way he could not understand, he was in the way of healing.

Here we get at the heart of healing, saving faith. It is implicit trust. The patient who commits himself into a doctor's hands must trust him as to method and treatment. The stranger to him, and the more painful the methods may be, the greater the test on his absolute faith in the wisdom and skill of the one to whom he has entrusted himself for healing. So spiritually. To many an enquiring, seeking soul there comes at the outset of his search after light only a seemingly increased darkness and perplexity of soul. He looked for instantaneous light perhaps and lo! only increased darkness. Newton's well-known hymn, "I asked the Lord that I might grow," illustrates this. Yet the very strangeness of such

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experience begets at times further trust, the faith that this very strangeness is a token that he is in the hands of the all-skilful. He is made to believe that the way into ultimate light is the path of implicit *obedience*. And yet other difficulties arise to be overcome only by obedience. The blind man was bid go to Siloam and wash. Siloam! The name and place were familiar to him though he had never yet seen it, but he went to the spot now with new intention. How often is the seeker after spiritual light staggered by finding himself led back to old familiar truths—truths that he has heard of from his infancy, it may be, but now recalled to him with new intent—and sees and finds in them new meaning and power. He had been inclined to look for something altogether new, or perhaps startling, and here he is back at old familiar truths, and—here comes the marvel—his eyes are opened and he wonders now that he never saw things like that before! The blind man went in simple obedience to the soft flowing familiar waters of Siloam—he went and came seeing. It reads like the Old Testament story of Naaman. The underlying principle is the same in both, viz., that healing comes to the seeker in the exercise of simple, trustful obedience. As Dale puts it in his own experience, as given by him in his biography: he had, in his search after assured light, thought that he had not sufficiently examined into the outward evidences of Christianity. So he read

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over carefully Paley's *Evidences* with no greater light, but rather increased perplexity. "At last—how, I cannot tell—all came clear; I ceased thinking of myself and of my faith, and thought only of Christ; and then I wondered that I should have been perplexed for even a single hour."

The second step towards light was *fidelity to truth*—"following the gleam." As yet the man did not know much of Jesus, but the change in him was not only known to himself but marked by all. So we have the questioning of him by the neighbours, and then officially by the Sanhedrim, or College of Elders. The scenes in both cases are characteristic and instructive. He stuck to his story. He kept to truth as he knew it. At first he simply told his story. He gave Jesus all the credit of his healing, but said nothing as to His character. Pressed on this point, he confessed to his faith in Him as a prophet. Pressed still further as to His character and asked to deny His sinlessness, he at first but stuck to his own experience; he would not pronounce abstractly, but he would stick by what he knew—that He and He alone had wrought the miracle in him. Pressed still further he advanced from this to an assertion of Christ's sinlessness, and connects the physical miracle of his own healing with the still greater miracle of the Healer's sinlessness. The physical miracle was but a corollary to the moral one. The miracle was unique because the person was.

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Now what I would have you note here first of all is the man's fidelity to the little light he found ; he advances only one step at a time, and the ground reason for this is a moral one : fidelity to truth and its logic. He was a hero, a moral hero. No amount of questioning or threatening could move him from holding by what he knew, or from asserting what further truth he drew from what he already knew.

This is one absolute condition of progress in light : that we hold by, and assert, what little we possess. If we do not use the little truth we get faithfully and fearlessly, we can never expect to arrive at the full light. And let us note the progress he made as he followed the gleam, for it is instructive and may be so in present-day needs.

He starts from his experience of the healing power of Jesus—of what Jesus had done for him. That is his starting-point. But it is but a starting-point. As he is being questioned and pressed for a reason of the change in him, he passes step by step from the prophetic mission of Jesus, first to a negative attitude as regards His sinless character, and then to a positive recognition and assertion of His *sinlessness*. How, he asks his adversaries, could a sinner open the eyes of the blind? How could a sinful man do for me what Jesus has done?

Thus, arrival at *Christ's sinlessness* is the third great step in this man's advance into the light. Now his argument in present-day setting is very

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remarkable. He argues from the physical miracle to the moral. He regards the two as one consistent whole. This is still the only true and logical position. The great moral miracle of the sinlessness of Jesus stands as the one explanation of all others, including the physical. The denial of the physical paves the way for the denial of the moral; and granted the moral all others stand explained. So this man, by way of what Jesus had done for him, by way of the physical miracle, arrived at the moral.

The denial of the physical as we have said paves the way for the denial of the moral. That is its logical issue, and let us not blink the fact. We are met at present with a denial of the physical miracle as regards the person of our Lord with, at the same time, a seeming affirmation of the moral. Now I do not pronounce on what this may mean personally to those who hold it, but I do make bold to say that, whether they see it or no, the ultimate destiny of such a position is the denial of the moral. The denial of the physical miracle as regards the person of our Lord is but in germ the old Jewish and Socinian or Unitarian position of the ultimate denial of our Lord's deity—it is part of an anti-supernatural trend of thought.

The fourth step towards light was *recognition of Divine Sonship*. So far the once blind man had got by fidelity to the light he had—the sinlessness of his Healer. A further step into the full light awaited him by the grace of that same Healer.

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His fidelity to the truth he had got was to be rewarded by still further light. He was fully prepared to receive such. So comes the question of our text and the sequel.

This acceptance of the Divine Sonship of our Lord is but the sequel—logical and inevitable—to the recognition of His sinlessness. The Divinity of our Lord is not a mere metaphysical dogma; it is a divinity that has a moral content. It was the spotless, sinless, perfect life of Jesus which laid for the first disciples the foundation of their faith in His Divinity and Lordship. To the once blind man who had been brought by the logic of his own case into the recognition of Christ's sinlessness, it was but a step into that of His Divine Sonship. To hold the sinlessness of Jesus and yet to deny His true deity is to be illogical. But the logic that leads to full faith in Jesus as the Son of God is that of the heart, as well as that of the head. As in the blind man's case so in ours—it must have its root in personal experience of what Christ has done for us. And so the simplest and most unlearned can give their testimony to the Divine Sonship of Jesus. He has become to them the way to the Father. "What are your views on the Eternal Generation of the Son?" was the question asked by a theological brother of a simple backwoodsman, who was a candidate for being a local preacher, and as such was being examined by the brethren. The man simply stared in wonder and was silent.

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"How do you know that Jesus is the Son of God?" asked another brother who understood him better. "Why, praise His name, sir, because He saved my soul." This faith in Jesus as the Son of God is the centre of all our hopes, the source and inspiration of all our best activities, the secret of life's victory.

"Who is he that overcometh the world but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"

IV

THE REGAL WORDS OF JESUS HIS GRANT OF PARDON

MARK ii. 5 ; LUKE vii. 48 ; JOHN viii. 11.

WE have three instances in the Gospels of Christ's direct grant of pardons—that of the paralytic ; of the woman who was a sinner ; and of the woman taken in adultery. In each of these cases He spoke with regal authority, as a king would to the comfort and joy of the forgiven ones, but to the astonishment and, in some cases, offence of the onlookers.

1. *Pardon is a royal act.* The king is the fountain of authority : he condemns and he acquits. Every death warrant has to be signed by the king as the supreme authority. It is not a personal but a public act, namely that of the highest authority, the supreme seat of justice and government. So again every deed of forgiveness and reprieve has to be signed by the same hand, that of the king. So it is with regard to sin, its condemnation and its pardon. Sin is done

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against the supreme moral authority—God, the great governor, and both its condemnation and its pardon come from Him. It is this fact that, on the one hand, fills the awakened soul with dread, and, on the other, the pardoned soul with peace and joy. Pardon, when it comes, comes from the very same authority as has the right of condemnation. Nowhere does this truth come out more strikingly than in the fifty-first psalm. Sin is felt as an offence against the supreme authority—God, and all other issues fall into abeyance before this dread truth. “Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight.” And to the same authority the penitent cries for mercy and for pardon. Sin is done against the high authority of heaven, and from this same high authority must come the pardon if it is to be real. So, as was noted by none more quickly than by Christ’s critics and enemies, His claim to authoritatively forgive sin was really a claim to Divine kingship. God’s full authority was in Him. In the answer in our Shorter Catechism as to the kingship of Christ, you will find no mention of this aspect of His kingship; forgiveness is connected rather with His priesthood. Of this more anon. God’s ministry of pardon through our Lord Jesus Christ is a royal thing—as Paul puts it, “Grace reigns.”

2. *Pardon is an act of royal grace.* Mark you, we are considering, not the case of the acquittal

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of the innocent—that must ever be an act of pure justice, there is no grace at all in that, it is the due of innocence. What we are concerned with is the pardon of the guilty, which must always be an act of grace, of free unfettered favour. Grace has always in it an element of freedom; there can be no compulsion about it; it must, in order to be grace, be spontaneous; but about justice there is always an element of compulsion. There is thus about all forgiveness an element of kingly graciousness. The gracious forgiving spirit has ever about it an element of kingliness. The unforgiving character has always about it an element of smallness, narrowness, pettiness, meanness. The truly kingly character is one not only that has authority to forgive, but that has the will so to do. In other words, there must be in forgiveness not only kingly authority but kingly grace. The gracious man is the kingly man. So as regards this highest forgiveness of all—God's in Christ—we have the supreme grace or graciousness of God displayed. God is not only the fountain of all authority, but the fountain-head of all grace and pity and love.

As we read those three narratives of authoritative forgiveness by Jesus, how remarkably the kingly combination of authority and graciousness, divine and human largeness of heart, appear. What a contrast is the graciousness, the tenderness, the royal grace of Jesus to the carping, censorious pettiness of His critics. Christ's spirit

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was the very opposite of the Pharisaic one. The Pharisees in each case were there, not from pity, or to sympathise with, or to save the poor victims of suffering and sin, but to find fault and condemn. If there was any pity at all in their breasts it was buried beneath their prevailing self-righteousness, and pride, and love of fault-finding. Not so Jesus, the vicegerent of heaven's love, and pity, and grace. His was the kingly nature that rose above all other considerations save those of the salvation and restoration to physical and moral health of the poor victims of suffering and sin. His fellow-townsmen of Nazareth had, at the beginning of his Galilean ministry in their synagogue, wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth, and now as then they were words of grace—of kingly grace in its highest form, that of the forgiveness of sin—which fell from His lips. And that heart of grace Jesus still retains for the victims of sin and suffering—for every penitent that comes to Him. He is the channel of the Father's love and grace, and that in no cold mechanical fashion, but as of old through His own royal grace of heart and lip.

3. *A royal pardon is a final act.* There is no going back on a royal pardon. The man once pardoned cannot be condemned for the same old offence. Christ's royal pardon carries in it finality.

4. *Christ's royal pardon stands related to His priesthood.* In the person of our Lord you cannot

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separate any of His so-called offices. Jesus is a king-priest, and His royalty is a priestly royalty ; just as reversing the order you can see He is a priest-king, and His priesthood a royal priesthood. Jesus as king does not pardon out of relation to His priesthood. His authority to forgive sin rests on His priesthood and all implied in it. His pardon is an act of royal grace, yet it is not of grace alone as it reaches the sinner but of justice too. He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. His grants of pardon when on earth were anticipatory of His great sacrifice for sin. Thus John puts His forgiveness on the ground of right and justice. "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." God is just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. So royalty and priesthood combine in the pardon of the sinner.

Now I wish to look at some of the results in heart and life of our apprehension of the royal character of our pardon.

1. It should produce a deep and lasting joy in the assurance of sin forgiven. What a joy it is when the sinner sees that the very same authority that condemns him is that from which his acquittal comes. God condemns and God acquits. As Paul says, "If God can be for us who can be against us?" God's pardon is assured to us in Jesus. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

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It is Christ who mediates God's pardon. The assurance of God's pardon is conveyed to every penitent, believing soul on the authority of the word, and through the person and mediation of our Lord. Every penitent, believing soul has a right to hear still the kingly words of Jesus, "Thy sins are forgiven thee, go in peace." He needs no other authority, no other mediator of pardon, no other priest or sacrifice; he has all these in the words and person of his Lord. He must receive His word of pardon and peace; that is all he needs, and he has it from Christ. How deep and strong then should be the joy of him who has faith rooted in the pardoning mercy of God in his Son our Lord.

2. Then what a source of strength this assurance should be—strength to live a new life for God and man. The pardoned paralytic went forth a healed and strengthened man. The woman that was a sinner went forth from the Pharisee's house not only pardoned but with new hope and courage and strength to live a new life; and the guilty woman crushed and crouched at His feet arose strengthened to sin no more. So it was with Christ's pardoning mercy of old; so it is still. Herein lies the marvellous transforming power of the Gospel. "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature; old things are passed away, all things are become new." I have lately been reading two books which bear distinct and striking testimony to the transforming power of

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the Gospel, the one a record of work in the foreign, the other a record of work in the home field—the lives of Dr Stewart of Lovedale, in South Africa, and of Dr Wilson of Fountainbridge, Edinburgh. In both spheres conversion to God and the realisation of His authoritative pardon in Jesus Christ changed savages into saints, lions into lambs, and sent forth men and women into all the spheres of life Christianised and so civilised.

And here let me say that Protestantism with its emphasis upon the individualism of man and the kingship and priesthood of our Lord, its consequent abhorrence of priestcraft of all sorts, and its maintenance of the supremacy of God's word, has ever made for strength and independence of character. It has maintained the place and right of the individual conscience as the court of God in man, wherein is pronounced by Him the word either of condemnation or acquittal. Herein is heard the voice of God's law condemning, or the voice of God's love in Christ acquitting. The one who has heard either of these voices in his own heart will seek little of man's judgment either of approval or the reverse. The man who either fears or loves God supremely will be delivered from all other fears or loves. Especially will the pardoned man stand and serve in God's presence. Little did the paralytic, or the woman in Simon's house, or the crushed and weeping penitent at Christ's feet care for the carping criticisms of Pharisees and others. No

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doubt they would have to meet with more of man's judgment and criticism as they passed out of the immediate presence of Jesus into daily life. They would have many a sneer and shake of the head to face as they went forth to their daily life once more, trying to live a new life. They had got Christ's pardon, but they had still to regain the confidence of their fellows, and to live down the consequences of their past misdeeds; and no doubt they would be at times hard put to as the inexorable world demanded of them now not profession merely but practice. But their strength in the conflict would ever be the kingly assurance of Jesus. They had His verdict, what mattered the verdict of man? So from the presence of the King His pardoned ones went forth with His joy as their strength to live themselves the kingly life of victory over former weakness and sin.

Yes, yes; it is in the kingly pardon of Jesus that we find both the joy and the strength of life.

Let us day by day go forth as His pardoned ones, joyously leaning on His royal word of pardon, and strengthened thereby to do His Father's will continually.

V

PARDON AND POWER THE HEALING OF THE PARALYTIC

MAT. ix. 2-8 ; MARK ii. 1-12 ; LUKE v. 17-26.

WE must put together the whole three accounts of this very important miracle in order to picture the scene and learn its full import. Mark and Matthew agree in telling us that it happened in a house in Capernaum, probably (for the words of Mark may be so rendered) in the house that formed Christ's home there. From Luke and Mark we learn that the house was crowded, packed with people. Luke supplies a further feature in the presence of Pharisees and doctors of the law, which were come out of every village of Galilee and Judaea. Critics, and not very favourably disposed ones, gathered there to watch Him. Luke supplies still another particular: that Christ had just come from a time of special retirement and prayer. The court and passages were packed. God's power to heal was present, Luke tells us, in a special manner. Christ is busy

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discoursing, seated probably on the upper balcony of the court, just under the tiled roof. Suddenly there is a movement, and loud whispering and talking heard in the direction of the door; then all is still save that footsteps are heard on the stair outside and the sound of tramping on the roof. Then there are heard strange sounds of scraping and tearing of the roof, then dust and bits of mortar begin to fall down upon speaker and audience, and lo! at last, daylight! and still the tearing goes on. What mean all these unseemly interruptions—and the preacher seems to take no notice? Suddenly there is a lull in the operations. The little bit of sky seen through the opening becomes suddenly darkened, and what! actually here is a man being lowered through the opened roof. Slowly and gently the strange intrusion descends, till at last there lies at the Master's feet a poor, helpless paralytic, his helplessness itself a prayer, as he looks up into the face of the Christ; and above appear looking down four eager faces, with a strange mixture on them of victory and anxiety. The only clouded faces are those of the Scribes and Pharisees, as they watch with mingled curiosity and criticism what will be the outcome of this already too scandalous proceeding. The proprieties of orderly worship have already been all broken through—they sit and watch what next.

If scandalised before they are doubly so now. A calm dignity rests on the Master's face as He

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stands up, and looking at the palsied one says, not tentatively but authoritatively, "Son, thy sins are forgiven thee." What! Have they heard rightly? Forgiveness! forgiveness here and now! This man told by another man that he is forgiven, and that here and now! Why, the rest was child's play to this! This is not merely impropriety, it is blasphemy! The scowl on the Pharisees' brow grew deeper than ever. Christ read their thoughts. He knew what that scowl meant. Strangers to any heartfelt and true sense of sin themselves, and equally strangers to any true forgiveness, the poor votaries of forms and ceremonies, mere worshippers of tradition and outward propriety, thinking themselves the righteous, and so standing in no need of forgiveness, and despising others, He well knew their heart enmity to Him and His teaching and preaching, and yet He would reason with them. Even for a Pharisee's sake He would delay this man's healing for a few moments longer, so as to convince and gain those critics if they could be won at all.

"You say that I am blaspheming—snatch from God a prerogative that is His alone. I grant your doctrine, but I deny your application of it. What good is that truth to a soul that cannot make it his? What good is that truth unless its comfort reaches the sinful soul? You sky it. You put it beyond man's reach. You neither have its comfort and strength yourselves, nor would you let others have them. What if God has given authority to

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Me, the Son of Man, to minister that truth to sin-paralysed souls? You think that I have gone to the region to which all impostors fly—the unknowable, the unreachable, and that I have chosen the ‘easier’ formula so as to escape detection. Well, I will give you proof if proof you want. Power follows pardon, I will make this man strong again.”

The Master turns again to the man and speaks, “Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thy house.” And immediately he arose, took up his bed and went forth before them all. He walked away in face of criticising Pharisees and Scribes, with head erect as every forgiven man does. The Pharisees and Scribes were silenced, but not won; convinced, but not converted; the multitude wondered and glorified God.

This narrative is rich in lessons. We cannot dwell upon the side ones, such as the connection between prayer and power in our ministries as in Christ’s; that difficulties and opposition and misunderstandings should drive us to our knees; that the more earnest and sincere a worker is the more he may expect opposition and criticism; that even with the most carping and unreasonable of men he should deal patiently, trying if possible to win them out of their unreasonableness and opposition. We must confine ourselves to some of the main lessons.

We have here a lesson of persevering faith.

To the critical and punctilious Pharisees and

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Scribes—the sticklers for propriety—the upholders of use and wont—no doubt the conduct of the five men, the paralytic and his four friends, for we must include them together as part and parcel in all their ongoings, must have appeared as the height of boldness and impropriety. To Christ the same ongoings seemed the triumph of faith. How well they must have gauged the character of Jesus. They had already seen it to be the very opposite of that of the Pharisees. They were set on *saving the proprieties*; He was set on *saving men*. They were all taken up with questions of *doctrine and ceremonies*; He with questions of *humanity*. The sounds that were offending to them were, so far from being interruptions, grateful sounds in His ears. They were to Him signs that there were present at least some who so believed in His love and compassion and power that they thought that if only they could get His eye and ear for a case of distress, all their need would be met. He would not find fault with them.

Note two things then in this faith:

1. It was a faith that *believed in the love and compassion and power of Jesus*.

2. It was a faith *that took them through all difficulties and obstacles to reach Christ*. Stairs, roofs, Pharisees, doctors of law, were nothing to these men. They wanted to lay their burden at the Master's feet, knowing it would not be in vain. They succeeded and were not disappointed.

The forgiveness of sin is man's deepest, greatest need.

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"Son, thy sins are forgiven thee." The words as addressed to the paralytic are remarkable. Up to the utterance of these words by Christ there is no hint that this man's outstanding need or even wish was "forgiveness of sins." Christ's words are a revelation to us, as perhaps they were to the man himself. He had come for physical health: all his wish and strivings hitherto had been for bodily restoration. Christ would both reveal to him his real need, and lead him into the obtaining of spiritual health along with bodily. We have already suggested that the pause in the healing might have been for the Pharisees' sake; perhaps the truer view is to regard it as meant to serve a double purpose, namely, also to give pause to the suppliant to apprehend his true need. It does not take long when Christ speaks with authority to a man's soul for that man to see and know himself. I remember a story I used often to hear from my friend Mr MacBeath, late of Ness, about a good man in the Inverness way who used to say that all his conviction of sin before coming to Christ was what he got between one end of Inverness bridge and the other. It is a great mistake that some enquirers make when they think that they must wait for conviction of sin before coming to Christ. Oftentimes conviction, true conviction of sin, is got in coming to Christ, and just at the point when the truth of a full, free, immediate pardon of sin breaks on the soul authoritatively

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from Christ. That was my own difficulty—thank God it was met—that I had not conviction of sin, and should wait till I had. Bonar's little book told me no; do not wait; go at once to Christ. He works, He gives conviction of sin, and that at the moment of pardon. I went and found it so; and have ever preached so, let all the critics in Scotland and the Highlands be added to those of Galilee and Jerusalem. I remember hearing Denham Smith, the Dublin Evangelist, illustrate this very aptly and beautifully from his own experience. He was once evangelising in Paris. So busy had he been all day that he had hardly broken fast, but he never felt the pangs of hunger, nor knew how really hungry and thirsty he was till on his way home passing the shop windows. Food and drink within his reach awakened the sleeping pangs of hunger and thirst. So with the authoritative offer of a free, full, immediate pardon by Jesus to the sinner. It is the free pardon of the Gospel that rouses the deepest soul pangs for pardon and forgiveness.

Some have supposed that in this man's case there was a special sense of sin weighing on his spirit. Christ did not then so much rouse the longing for forgiveness as read it. As He read the Pharisees' hearts and secret thoughts so He read this man's. Some think further that the man's sense of sin and longing for forgiveness were deepened by the fact that his physical helplessness was the direct result of his own

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sinful folly, and that he knew it, so that his sin was his real burden. In his case a thorough physical cure demanded as a preliminary condition that his soul be set free from its crushing and paralysing sense of guilt. Certainly some forms of paralysis are directly connected with vicious excess and self-indulgence, and it may have been so in this case. To another similarly afflicted—the paralytic at the pool of Bethesda—our Lord said after his healing, “Go and sin no more lest a worse thing come upon thee”; seemingly a direct intimation that his former affliction was traceable to special sin on his part. It may have been so in this case. But for the lesson before us such questions are beside the mark. The one thing to be noted is that for us as for this man, *the forgiveness of sin is our one grand need*. Sin is the one grand evil to be removed.

The forgiveness that Jesus ministers to the sinner that comes to Him is authoritative and immediate. Son, thy sins are forgiven thee: Forgiveness *authoritative, immediate*. It was this authoritative announcement of immediate pardon that so took the Pharisees’ and Scribes’ breath away. It was so in our Lord’s day; it was so in Luther’s day; it was so in Whitefield’s day; it is so still. Legalists and priests cry out against authoritative pardon here and now to sinners. Yet it is the very marrow of the Gospel. Have you as a sinner faith to receive it? Then here is for you this moment a free, full pardon.

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Let us just for a moment take Christ's words one by one; there is a gospel in each of them.

1. *Note the tenderness of Christ's address, "Son."* No word of harshness here. He may have sinned grievously; he may have brought all this on himself; but mark here not a word of upbraiding. Forgiveness, God's forgiveness, has its fountain-head in His love, His tender pity, His mercy. "God who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses and sins—" Christ is the revelation of God's love.

2. *Note the personal character of it.* Christ's message of pardon is a message to the individual soul. "*Thy sins are forgiven thee.*" This is what we need—what our souls cry for. And we get it—a personal pardon, spoken to ourselves alone.

3. *Note how Jesus seizes and deals with our very biggest, greatest difficulty between us and Him.* Some men shirk difficulties, shirk the question of their sins—like the fabled ostrich, bury their heads and consciences in the sands of oblivion, and think they have evaded the messengers of law and vengeance. Christ seizes what men themselves shrink from—their sins—holds them up, but it is to put them away for ever. "Son, thy sins"—do you not fancy you hear a groan or see a shudder pass through the man's frame at these ominous words: "now He is going to send me

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away," he thinks, "what is that I hear"—"are forgiven thee."

"He paused, and in the pause she crept an inch
Nearer, and laid her hands about his feet

Yet think not that I come to urge thy crimes,
I did not come to curse thee, Guinevere

Lo ! I forgive thee as eternal God
Forgives."

4. *Note the immediacy of it.* No penances here ; no prolonged agony of suspense, "Thy sins *are forgiven* thee." And forgiveness here means complete forgiveness ; all blotted out, as if they were not, and all this authoritatively. For mark again Jesus does not merely promise pardon or even give it ; He announces it, "Thy sins are forgiven thee," for that is the original. Christ you notice is only the minister of forgiveness. The Pharisees were right in saying that God alone was able to forgive sin : what they were wrong in was in not recognising Christ's right to minister it immediately and consciously to men. All men hold that God can forgive sin, and even that He does, but that is not the Gospel : the Gospel is that pardon is now preached in the Gospel, and becomes the present possession of every believing soul. Many as in our Lord's day grant the thing in theory while they deny it in fact. Jesus is the one minister still of God's forgiveness. His work for us is the one ground of our forgiveness and his word our one authority.

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"Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on Me hath everlasting life." He was to bear and put away a world's sin, and so He could authoritatively forgive this man. He has borne that load and put sin away by the sacrifice of Himself, and so now His authoritative forgiveness, or rather God the Father's through Him, is the present possession of all that come to and believe on Him. We need no other priest, we need no other sacrifice. Christ's sacrifice as the ground, and His word as our warrant, are enough for each suppliant, believing soul.

Forgiveness means renewed power.

As of old for Christ to say to a soul, "Son, thy sins are forgiven thee," and to say, "Arise and walk," is one and the same thing. Restored spiritual faculty is the immediate, or rather the accompanying effect of Christ's pardon. For spiritual and moral paralysis is both the penalty and the effect of sin.

"So the powers who wait
On noble deeds, cancell'd a sense misused."

Moral pollution paralyses, and so does guilt or the consciousness of sin unforgiven. But with forgiveness comes spiritual life and liberty. A forgiven man is a renewed man. The true Christian life of love and liberty begins with forgiveness. A cleansed conscience means a renewed heart and will. True manhood is begotten in us by God's forgiveness. He that

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knows himself forgiven and accepted of God is not only strengthened to do God's will, but to do it regardless of the judgment of his fellows. Look how this same man not only stands erect, but passes out carrying his bed in face of critical Scribes and Pharisees. What does he care now for all their scowls and sneers? He is heaven's pardoned, accepted child; a forgiven man he is a healthful one, and healthful he is upright and fearless. Upright! What a volume there is in that word. The forgiven man is the upright man. He can walk before God and man uprightly. What made Luther the fearless man he was? It was his consciousness of God's acceptance and approval. He walked with God. Here is what a historian says of him. "It is in particular instructive and refreshing to notice the quiet collectedness of soul, the deep rest and clearness which Luther maintained in the most threatening struggle, and in the near prospect of the Bull of Excommunication. This untroubled mirror of a child-like heart, in which the grace of heaven is reflected, stands in wonderful contrast to the storms which gathered around him, and is a proof that the confessor of the righteousness of faith had what he confessed, and was what he taught."

Forgiveness creates true manliness. I fear that some young men think the opposite, and that to become a Christian means to become a "ninny"; to divest oneself of all the characteristics of true manliness. We fear that perhaps a certain type

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of Christianity does foster this notion ; but it is not the truest or the highest. A truly forgiven man should be a truly noble man. God's forgiveness throws open to Him the whole universe of God. All things are yours, says the apostle, for ye are Christ's and Christ is God's. Young Christians, be upright, be manly. Think for yourselves, act for yourselves. Stand up against the world like men—God's free men—God's sons.

Renewed life is the proof of pardon.

Works prove faith, so says James. James's teaching is not the contrast but the complement of Paul's. The proof in this case that the man was forgiven was his standing and walking. This is the order : pardon, life, walk. The last proves the other two, though it does not create them ; it is effect, not cause. Pardon and life are purely spiritual things. The world that sees and knows them not demands proof. They cannot understand theological or experimental phraseology without life and conduct. Character and conduct is what all can understand ; none gainsay. That is the best theology that produces the best character and conduct. By their fruits ye shall know them, says the Master. The man's new life was proof to himself and others that his pardon was not a fancy but a fact. If you profess to be pardoned then prove it by your life ; otherwise men will say, and rightly, that for you at least it is mere talk, phraseology, fancy.

Silence criticism by character.

VI

THE PERFECT PRIESTHOOD

HEB. iv. 14-16.

THIS is really the subject of this whole epistle, but I wish this morning to speak of the two things with regard to the person and character of our Lord which, according to our text, combine to make Him an ideal priest, viz., what we call His rank and His sympathy. Last Sabbath we noted how often the exhortation to "hold fast" was used in this epistle as one suited to men passing through a transition period, when men were called to distinguish between the passing and the permanent, between the methods in which or forms through which truth might be expressed, and that truth itself. Here we have this exhortation coupled with another duty, or rather privilege, that of prayer. The holding fast is to be a religious one rather than an intellectual one. And He seems to me to give us over against these two duties two other things, that to which to hold and that by which to hold, namely, the Divine person of

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our Lord, and His sympathy. It is this combination in our Lord of power and sympathy which makes Him for us the Perfect Priest. Let us look at these separately, and then in their combination.

The Divine rank of our Lord.

"A great high priest passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God." The New Testament ever treats of the person of our Lord from a religious standpoint—as He is to us an object of trust and worship. The end of His manifestation was to bring us to God. He is the revelation to men of God; as He Himself said, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." He connects men with God. This constitutes the element of power in His priesthood—His Divine rank, what St Paul calls His equality with God. This High Priest is at the head of things, enthroned in the heavenlies.

"And a Priest's hand through creation
Waveth calm and consecration,"

All power is His in heaven and on earth. All things are given into His hand.

His humanity and compassion.

But the writer seems to have anticipated, and so to answer, a thought which would suggest itself at this point to his readers, and one which still finds place in men's thoughts concerning the person of our Lord, namely, as to whether this high rank of His, if it be His, does not lift Him up beyond and above humanity—is this compatible with a real humanity that can thoroughly under-

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stand and sympathise with men? We say that this is a thought which still possesses the minds of men. Does not the affirmation of Divine rank for our Lord lift Him out of the category of the human? The problem and question to us is the very opposite of that of the men of our Lord's day. Their difficulty was to rise through the really and manifestly human to the Divine. Ours is to reach down through the acknowledged and accepted Divinity of our Lord down to his true human experience—His real humanity. The apostle to the Hebrews seems here to anticipate this difficulty—this seeming contrast. Perhaps the by this time more or less crystallised creed of the Church gave rise to it in some minds. There is such a thing as so to affirm our Lord's Divinity as to hide His humanity. I often ask myself if it was not this over-emphasis which, if it did not give rise to, fostered Mariolatry in the Church of Rome—the approaching of our Lord through His more human mother—the substitution of the humanity, the womanhood if you will, of Mary for the humanity, the sympathy, the womanly, shall we say, in the person of our Lord. The truth is that the Incarnation was just the answer to man's wish to find humanity in God. It is this hungering that Browning expresses in his Saul:—

“’Tis the weakness in strength that I cry for! my flesh,
that I seek

In the Godhead! I seek and find it. O Saul it shall be
A face like my face that receives thee; a man like to me

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Thou shalt love and be loved by for ever ; a hand like
this hand
Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee ! See the
Christ stand."

Our text meets this difficulty and answers this longing by a presentation to us of the real sympathy of our Lord, the fruit of the possession by Him of a true human nature and His having gone through a real human experience.

Do not let any one suppose that this affirmation of the high rank of our Saviour either raises Him out of the category of the human, or places Him above the exercise of the tenderest sympathy.

And how beautifully he presents this humanity of Jesus and the consequent sympathy of our Lord in the most tender form. "Touched!" This word is used seemingly advisedly to bring before us the exceeding tenderness of our Lord's fellow-feeling. "Touched!" It does not need a great and extraordinary lot of suffering to elicit our Lord's sympathy—our smallest troubles, cares, anxieties, worries, call forth His sympathy as do our greatest and heaviest crosses and losses.

"Touched." Might we call the sympathy of the Lord His sensitiveness. "Touched": where there is perfect harmony, sympathy, the sympathetic note is spontaneously evoked. You have in a room two wires perfectly attuned to the same musical note. If you touch the one so as to make it give forth its note, the other will in sympathy respond. Our Saviour's nature is perfectly attuned

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to ours, and every note struck on ours awakens a sympathetic note in His. Earthquakes are earth tremors, and there are instruments now made for recording earth tremors so finely made and sensitive as to record tremors that otherwise would pass unfelt and unnoted. The seismometer of man's invention is but a poor analogy for the heavenly sympathy of our Lord, which registers in heaven all the pains and travails of earth.

“There is no place where earth's sorrows
Are more felt than up in heaven ;
There is no place where earth's failings
Have such kindly judgment given.”

There is one limitation which would at first sight seem to detract from the sympathy of our Lord : it is that of sinlessness—“yet without sin.” But if we look at it more closely we shall see that it is the very opposite which holds. Are we prepared to maintain that the coarser the moral fibre the more perfect the sympathy? The analogy in the physical world should read us a lesson. The more perfect the instrument the more sensitive it is, registering the slightest disturbance or deviation. It is so morally. It is not the coarser but the finer natures which are most susceptible of sympathy : the purer the nature the more sensitive is it to deviation from right or the slightest temptation thereto. The truth is that our Lord's sinlessness lies at the root of His sympathy. The perfect human nature is a nature supremely sensitive to human suffering. His sinlessness did

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not render Him immune from suffering when tempted. He suffered being tempted though He did not sin—the very sinlessness of His nature being at the root of His suffering as it is now at the root of His sympathy. Take an instance. Here are two men in exactly the same circumstances of temptation. Both are fathers of families dependent on them. Both are out of employment. To both a way opens up by which they could obtain bread for their families, but at the sacrifice of good conscience. One man yields: the other equally loving his family, but loving right and a good conscience still more, stands firm. Which of them suffers most, the man who yields or the man who stands? Which of them is, after the temptation is passed, best suited to enter into the feelings of one similarly tempted and be his best adviser and his stay? Surely in both respects the man who was tempted, yet without sin.

Our Saviour's sinlessness. It is not sinlessness alone, mark you, which causes sympathy. Innocence is not virtue. Virtue is sinlessness after temptation—it is innocence tested. It is from this that sympathy comes. It is the combination of suffering and sinlessness which constitutes perfect sympathy.

The combination of rank and sympathy.

What makes the perfection of our Lord's Priesthood is the combination of rank and sympathy. Our Lord's Priesthood is like to that to which He has called us—a kingly priesthood. One of the

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greatest wants amongst us is the combination of power and sympathy, which is really another side of service. We are in the midst just now of great social and economic struggles. Take one: that between capital and labour—between employers and employed. Both are struggling for power for mastery. And therein lies the lack, as one of the leaders aptly remarked the other day: "What is wanted is sympathy on both sides, for without sympathy there will never be agreement; there must be mutual trust and mutual respect and mutual sympathy." Now from both sides this is not confessedly easy. Yet it is necessary, and perhaps present troubles will lead to it; for we are on the way to it. We are again in modern days coming to a truer understanding of wherein consists true kingliness. Our Royal Family have set and still set a noble example of the combination of rank and sympathy. We owe this ideal we think to Christianity. In it we see the combination of king and priest, of rank and sympathy. You will remember how beautifully John puts it in his presentation of the Christ, in his narrative of the washing of the disciples' feet (John xiii.). "Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from God and went to God, He riseth from supper and laid aside His garments; and took a towel and girded Himself," etc. (*cf.* Phil. ii.; 2 Cor. viii. 9).

It is this combination of rank and power and

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sympathy which makes Jesus the perfect High Priest. Very God of very God, He is yet very man of very man. It is thus that He is able to help and that effectively. I once heard the Rev. F. B. Meyer of London illustrate this by his own case. It seems that Mrs Meyer was very delicate, suffering from some affection that necessitated her being moved with the greatest gentleness, in order to avoid excruciating pain. He never could move her himself. He had the love and sympathy but he lacked the power; his attempts only resulted in failure and pain. But he had a man-servant who was a very powerful man, and who could lift the patient so easily and so gently as that she felt little or no pain. So he was called in when any necessity for change and lifting arose. Mr Meyer had the sympathy and love but not the power. The man-servant had the power but not the perfect love and sympathy. It took the two of them, the one to give the sympathy, the other to exercise the power. Not so our Lord. His Priesthood is the perfect one, because one of perfect combination of power and sympathy. If so our two duties are clear—patience and prayer—both elicited by our Saviour's priestly power and sympathy.

Let us hold fast; let us come boldly to the throne of grace.

VII

ONCE FOR ALL

HEB. x. 10.

A MAN that is to persuade and win others, especially if they be dull of apprehension, cannot be too simple, nor can he at times too often repeat the one point to be enforced. "Line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little" was Isaiah's method. It is that of the Apostle in Hebrews. He iterates and re-iterates the same truth of Christ's one sacrifice once for all, for it is, to him and to those he addresses, the one grand truth of truths.

A very successful lawyer, one especially successful in jury cases, was asked for the secret of his success. "Repetition" was his answer. "I begin by picking out the one I think to be the stupidest of the jurymen. I keep my eye on him as I proceed. If I see that he fails to take up any point I keep repeating, repeating it till I see he has taken it in, and then I know all the others have."

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The Hebrews were, as the Apostle did not scruple to tell them, "dull of hearing" (v. 11). The one point he wished to make clear was the excellency of Christ's Priesthood. This he does by again and again repeating to his dull jurymen, to whom he is submitting an issue, a favourable or unfavourable verdict on Christianity, the fact of the efficacy, the sole efficacy and all-sufficiency of Christ's one sacrifice. No less than seven times does he repeat the phrase as applied to Christ's offering of Himself—"once," "one" offering once—that is the point he iterates and reiterates.

And perhaps we need to have it reiterated too. He shows it to us in at least three aspects or bearings, and we would do well to consider them, for some even amongst ourselves be dull of hearing.

1. He speaks of Christ's offering being *once for all* as by virtue of its *all-sufficiency* (ix. 12 ff.).

It and it alone could put away sin. His was the one well-pleasing sacrifice to God, and His the one sacrifice that could take guilt from off the conscience. It was impossible for the blood of bulls and of goats to take away sin. There could be no moral efficacy in such sacrifices. How could mere physical pain of utterly irrational and irresponsible creatures take away moral pollution and guilt? Some great moral act of self-sacrifice by some rational and responsible agent, whose

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whole spirit and acting would be well-pleasing to God, could alone make reparation for moral wrong-doing and sin. We are not surprised that in this connection the Apostle should dwell so largely, if not quite exclusively, on the moral elements in Christ's sacrifice—those elements which indeed constitute its "oneness," its uniqueness, its incomparableness. We are sometimes apt to dwell, we think too much, upon the physical sufferings of our Saviour, as if they bulked largest in the great atonement. This is quite unscriptural. Take any of the Old Testament or New Testament notices of the atonement, and you will find as here in this Epistle the emphasis laid on the moral elements—Christ's love, His obedience, His meekness and patience, His self-sacrifice. He came to lay down His life for His sheep. He came to do His Father's will; He humbled Himself; He took the form of a servant; He became poor; He was obedient even unto death, the shameful death of the cross; He reviled not; He opened not his mouth; He glorified not Himself; He took the cup His Father gave Him to drink. He offered Himself without spot "through the eternal Spirit." These were the moral elements in it that formed its moral and unique efficacy. It was a sacrifice of *love and obedience*; "*Lo, I come to do Thy will O God.*" It was the one morally sublime act of obedience and self-sacrifice that for ever stood against and cancelled the first man's one act of disobedience

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and self-pleasing. By one man's disobedience, many were made sinners. "By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous" (Rom. v. 19).

This incomparableness of Christ's sacrifice constitutes its *oneness*. It is the *one* sacrifice for sin. All side questions are swallowed up or rather met and answered here—all those perplexing questions about extent, etc. The Apostle does not see these at all. By him they cannot be entertained, for the question of "oneness"—of all-sufficiency has really settled them. *This is the one sacrifice for sin.* That is enough for him ; and it ought to be enough for us. The question of the extent does not enter into his mind at all or trouble him. In itself this sacrifice was the one all-sufficient atonement—the moral reparation for man's sin. The extent was a matter that was settled practically by the faith or unbelief of the individual worshipper. And this is the proper way of approaching the subject. Do not let questions of extent come between you and Jesus. Theoretically this atonement is all-sufficient, and practically it is all-efficacious to all that come to Him.

"Once for all, O sinner, receive it,
Once for all, O brother believe it ;
Cling to the cross, the burden will fall,
Christ hath redeemed us once for all."

2. There is another side from which he treats of its "oneness," its being once for all, namely, that not merely of its all-sufficiency but of its

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universality, or as we might best put it, its *all-applicability*.

It avails and has availed for all times. It is the one sacrifice on the ground of which any sin has ever been or ever will be remitted. And it covers all so remitted. Otherwise Christ must have been offered again and again. His argument is perhaps peculiar, but it is really worth following, as it touches a very practical point, namely, as to whether Christ's sacrifice either needs to be or can be repeated. His argument runs thus: Sin could only be pardoned on the ground of Christ's sacrifice. Now sin has from the beginning been pardoned. Consequently it could only have been so done on the ground of Christ's sacrifice. But that sacrifice was never offered but once. Hence that one offering must have been sufficient, otherwise Christ would need to have been offered again and again. He was not so offered. Hence His one offering must have been not only all-sufficient, but *all-applicable* too.

There are two ways in which we can apply this truth to ourselves now. First, as *to the individual need of daily forgiveness*. We are justified, forgiven, once for all when we believe; but we also need daily forgiveness. Now Christ's atonement, this one offering, covers all. The forgiveness may be daily, but the offering or the ground of it is once for all. Hence Christ's death is *all-efficacious within the conscience*, and that for daily cleansing. My ground of acceptance and

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forgiveness is constant—for it is once for all—in the debt once paid. I need nothing for daily cleansing but the blood of Jesus.

“For my cleansing this I see
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.”

Some teach that at baptism original sin is washed away; at confirmation all post-baptismal ones, and at death by confession and extreme unction all post-confirmation sins are wiped away. Well, we do not wish to say one word unnecessarily to hurt those that may think themselves helped by these things. Baptism and confirmation, too, are helpful, if men do not make them hindrances. We are jealous for the glory of the Master's sacrifice. Nothing must be allowed to dim that; nor must we limit its application by man-devised barriers. The Apostle here speaks much of the new covenant—sprinkled with the blood of Jesus. Some limit the blood-sprinkling to water-sprinkling, and relegate the unbaptised to what they call God's uncovenanted mercy. I heard a very good story in this connection of an answer given by a lady to one of these priests. She met him one day running along the street in a great hurry. She asked where he was running to at such a speed. He said it was to baptise a dying infant. “And what would happen suppose he died before you got there?” she asked. “O,” was the reply, “I would leave it on God's uncovenanted mercy.” “Indeed,” said the lady,

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“and do you mean to say that God’s mercy depends on the speed of your legs?” God’s mercies in Christ are independent of any priestly absolution or interference. Christ’s one sacrifice has secured that.

So also on this ground we see the futility of the sacrifice of the mass, either for the dead or the living. Christ’s sacrifice does not need repetition either in part or whole. The mass is an attempt to revive the very thing the Apostle here says has been done away in Christ’s one sacrifice. No other sacrifice is needed, and it—the great sacrifice once for all—does not need to be repeated. It is once for all. The Lord’s Supper is not a sacrifice other than one of praise. It is a Eucharist.

3. But the Apostle treats of it in still another aspect as offered once for all. It is *final*. It cannot be repeated. There remains no more sacrifice for sin. Again he uses a rather striking argument, or rather analogy. Men die but once; nothing remains thereafter but the appointment to them of their final state. So, he says, Christ died but once. There cannot be any second death for him (vv. 27, 28). When He returns to earth it is not to die again but to give judgment upon men. According to the Apostle death fixes all. This aspect of Christ’s atonement is very solemn.

Death fixes all. To the Apostle there is no probation after death—only judgment. There is not even a hint of such a thing. The whole drift of his teaching—of his view of life and of

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both Old and New Testament history and experience—is entirely the other way. According to this Epistle there are sufficient materials to men's hand in this life whereby their characters are formed and tested. God has in all ages and under all dispensations been dealing with men to bring them into His rest; if men have fallen short of entering into it it has been their own fault. Much more is this the case under the Gospel. Those that fall away fall away from possibility of repentance; those that sin wilfully can only look for judgment and fiery indignation (x. 26-31). The modern Esau can find no place of repentance. All the probation is here, beyond it is judgment or salvation.

Nor is there any hint of *purgation* after death. All the cleansing is here and now. If the blood of Jesus and the discipline of life suffice not to cleanse, no eternal pains can do it. To some this may seem hard, but we suspect it is truest kindness. What good purpose can it serve to relax the considerations that close in men to make the best of the present time and opportunity, and, in reason, how can pangs and remorse effect what faith and repentance failed to effect here? For, and this is a strong point with the Apostle, there remains no more sacrifice for sin. The finality of man's state is determined by his relation to this one sacrifice for sin.

We fear that there is a grand mistake sometimes made in regard to the relation of Christ's

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sacrifice to sin. We fear that some think that Christ's sacrifice for and putting away of sin means that under no circumstances will sin be punished—that somehow Christ's sacrifice has secured immunity from sin's penalty irrespective altogether of men's relation either to the sacrifice itself or to sin. In a word Christ has died to make sin in all cases unpunishable; let a man live as he lists now, eternal salvation is at last his—if not saved in this life he will have a chance in the next.

Now this seems to us a misinterpretation of Christian teaching. Sin's penalty is not remitted except to the sincerely penitent—the finally impenitent so far from having sin's penalty lessened will only have it increased. It is a far more awful thing, the Apostle teaches, to die impenitent under the Gospel than under the law. Sin has been condemned in the Cross of Christ, and for one to continue in sin under the Gospel is not merely to perish as under the law but to perish more awfully still. Instead of being encouraged to sin under the Gospel never were the dread consequences of final impenitence so clearly and awfully announced. Before the Gospel came men might have excuse, but now they have none. Sins that the law failed to cleanse away Christ's blood could cleanse from. But let that blood be despised, and by impenitence fail of its effect, then there remains no more sacrifice for sin. It seems to us that all systems of probation

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and purgation after death amount to an ignoring of the final character of Christ's sacrifice once for all. Let a sinner once pass that Cross and there is no new sacrifice—no new exhibition of God's mercy and love, no new appliance for His salvation. Now, now, now, is the day of grace, now is the day of salvation. "To-day if ye will hear His voice harden not your hearts." God now waits to be gracious, but "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

Christ has died for sin once.

VIII

A LIVING WITNESS TO THE POWER OF CHRIST

“But Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with Him.”—JOHN xii. 2.

THE raising of Lazarus marked the highest point of our Lord's ministry, the fullest exhibition of His Divine power, until the highest of all, His own resurrection. It marked the great turning-point in His history; it was the end of His public ministry; from that time His death was fixed on by the Jews, and its accomplishment was but a matter of time and opportunity. We have at the beginning of this chapter a beautiful picture of a social feast given by the friends of Jesus at Bethany in His honour. “There they,” we know not exactly who they were—the villagers, or at least His friends among them—“made Him a supper.” Matthew and Luke say it was in the house of Simon the leper—a subject perhaps of

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Jesus' healing power. It was a meeting of Christ's friends.

“From every home the neighbours met,
The streets were filled with joyful sound,
A solemn gladness even crowned
The purple brows of Olivet.”

Martha, as was her wont, served. Mary had her own token of love in reserve. Lazarus sat at the table, a living witness to the power of Jesus. Lazarus was a living witness to

The restoring power of Christ. “Lazarus was one of them.” Lazarus! once dead, the subject of corruption, now among the living. Browning in his famous portraiture of him pictures him as in the robustest of health.

“As much indeed beyond the common health,
As he were made and put aside to show ;
Think, could we penetrate by any drug,
And bathe the wearied soul and worried flesh,
And bring it clear and fair by three days' sleep !”

Lazarus, with his restored physical life, robuster now than ever, was a miracle of Christ's resurrection power. Are Christ's miracles in the moral and spiritual sphere any less wonderful? They are more so and they are still among us—men and women raised up from moral and spiritual death and corruption, and restored to newness of life. The moral and spiritual triumphs of Christianity are its best apologies. There is no witness to Christ like that of a changed life. The history of Christian missions witness to the

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transforming, renewing power of Jesus Christ. We have only to read the story of our own Livingstonia Mission, or that of the South Seas, to see this. Those who work among the lost and lapsed of our own land can bear witness to equally striking transformations. But it is not only among the degraded and morally lapsed at home or abroad that we see this transforming power of Jesus Christ. It is seen in every true Christian, whether or no that Christian can lay hand on any specially marked crisis in his or her life. There is no power so transforming, so renewing, as the power of Jesus in the heart and life of believing men and women. The life of Christ in the soul is the most radical and the most transforming of all forces; and it tells often most powerfully when silently lived. Lazarus was in himself, without any words, a witness for Christ. We do not read that Lazarus ever turned a preacher, or said much, if anything at all.

“Behold a man raised up by Christ!
The rest remaineth unrevealed;
He told it not; or something sealed
The lips of that evangelist.”

So all who are Christ's can witness for Him by their lives. And the secret of this is to yield ourselves more and more to the power of the indwelling Christ. We must live the resurrection life, so that men may say of us, “Behold a man raised up by Christ!” And we must learn to say this to ourselves, and so try to live the risen life.

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"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above."

Christ restores to the duties of life. "Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table." Christ's own life was the ideal one. Holy, harmless, undefiled, He yet did not shrink from the duties of life, nor shun its harmless festivities. Nor did He teach His disciples to. So we find Himself and His disciples at this social feast, and also Lazarus of the risen life. The risen life of the Christian is not one to be lived apart from the world and its duties, but in it. To be in the world and yet not of it is the calling of the Christian. Christianity does not unfit men for any of the duties of life; it is rather their proper equipment. Jesus toiled for His daily bread at the carpenter's bench at Nazareth, and so the poet rightly represents Lazarus.

"Oft the man's soul springs into his face,
As if he saw again and heard again
His sage that bade him 'rise,' and he did rise
. . . : then back he sinks at once
In sedulous recurrence to his trade,
Whereby he earneth him the daily bread;
And studiously the humbler for that pride,
Professedly the faultier that he knows
God's secret, while he holds the thread of life."

Christ is the giver of life, and life means work, toil. It also means joy, personal and social. At the grave He turned death into life, weeping into joy. Jesus is the creator and giver of joy.

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Now there are two views which have been taken by Christian men of the Christian's relation to the world, its duties and its joys. The one is *renunciation*. The extreme of this view is seen in the monastic and conventual life—in the renunciation of all earthly ties and duties as antagonistic to true consecration and holiness. Now there is no denying but that renunciation has a place in the Christian life, but it is one not so much of principle as of expediency. There is the duty of denying ourselves in things lawful in themselves but inexpedient for us or others. To exemplify: I have heard of a certain surgeon, famous in his profession, and aspiring to still greater precision and excellence. He happened to be an enthusiastic golfer, but finding that golf rendered his hand somewhat unsteady in very delicate operations, he renounced it. Now this he did not because golf was wrong or unhealthy in itself, but simply because in his case its indulgence interfered with his proficiency in the higher art of saving life and relieving pain. He did not condemn golf in that renunciation, either in itself, or as regards its benefit to others. He probably would have prescribed it to the ordinary man as one of the most healthful and innocent of recreations.

So in that working out of the Christian life, and in that service which each of us has to render to God, there may be to us renunciation individually expedient in the higher spiritual interests of ourselves or others. This is what Christ meant by

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the cutting off of a right hand, or the plucking out of a right eye, in case of their proving occasions of offence. Better lose these than lose the goal of eternal life.

So also as to the renunciation in some cases of family or other social ties in the famous words: "If any man will come after Me and hate not his father and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters, yea and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple." Renunciation for the sake of the Kingdom is a law of the Kingdom, but it is only the ordinary law of loyalty and devotion which applies to the subjects even of earthly kingdoms. All personal and social claims have to yield to the higher ones of the Kingdom. But then these are all cases of emergency, of special care and call. Renunciation as a wholesale principle has proved of very doubtful benefit to the Kingdom of God among men. First of all, it can apply only to a few, whereas the ideal life is one that can be lived by all. And then in the second place, when applied on any large and general scale, it has resulted in creating more evils than it sought to remedy; and this again because it is a violation of the laws of nature—a crushing underfoot of instincts which are God-implanted, and which, if they are not allowed to run in the lawful and God-intended channels, will find vent for themselves in disastrous forms, like the thunder-burst which, during exceptionally dry seasons, works such havoc. Christianity is not meant to crush natural

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instincts, but to guide, subdue, and sanctify them.

Thus we come to the second Christian view, that of *retention for God and Christ and the Kingdom of God among men of life's forces*, the proper use of all God's gifts. We must never forget that in our Lord the Creator and Redeemer meet. Christ did not come to destroy His own work, but to redeem it. How is family life to be purified and sweetened? Not by renunciation, but by the redeeming of it. How is social life to be raised and purified? Not by renunciation, but by redemption—by claiming it and holding it for God and Christ. How is business, how is recreation, how is civic and national life to be purified and raised? Not again by renunciation, but by redemption. We want men and women of the risen life to conquer all the departments of our complex life for God and Christ, and holiness and truth, and purity and love. As our first parents were told to subdue the earth; as the Israelites were told to conquer the whole of Canaan, so we as Christians are called to retain and redeem every department and detail of life.

For the third lesson of our text and the secret of all this is, *that we may have continued fellowship with our Lord in life as a whole*. "Lazarus was one of them that sat at table with Him." Where our Lord was found and where He is still found should be no shunned ground to us. The duties

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and joys of earth so far from being meant to separate us from our risen Lord only give to Him and us occasions, opportunities, of sweetest, homeliest fellowship. It is in these, not apart from them, that we meet with our Lord. This Bethany feast was a feast of the Lord's friends. He was there, and his presence, so far from being irksome, was the most gladsome of all. How beautifully in this respect again does Browning give us the secret of the risen life, lived amidst ordinary earthly conditions. Of the risen Lazarus he says :—

“His heart and brain move there, his feet stay here.”

His was a case of—

“Heaven opened to a soul while yet on earth,
Earth forced on a soul's use while seeing heaven.”

He asks :—

“Whence has the man the balm that brightens all?”

And the answer is :—

“He holds on firmly to some thread of life—

Which runs across some vast distracting orb
Of glory on either side that meagre thread,
Which, conscious of, he must not enter yet—
The spiritual life around the earthly life.”

We can have our Lord's presence and fellowship in all our life—not merely at meetings, or on Sabbath days, or in our hours of silent waiting on

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Him, but as Carlyle said of Cromwell, "in all stations and on all occasions." In toil, in joy, in sorrow, in health, in illness, everywhere and at all times, amidst the duties of business and social life, it is our privilege to live with our Lord. This will lighten our toil, support us in trouble, compensate our losses, enhance our joys. We have spoken of surrender. For all such surrender when rightly made there are more than compensating joys. "No one hath forsaken father or mother or wife or sister or lands for My sake but shall receive an hundredfold in this life and in the world to come life everlasting."

In the things retained and enjoyed according to our Christian liberty, we have the added joy of His presence and smile. Christian faith and experience give an added zest to life. Lazarus must have had a new zest in life given him—a new and fresh interest and beauty added to it. He had died to it and bidden it a long farewell as he thought, and here it was all given back to him in this risen life just as he was given back to it. Hill, dale, home, friendship, must have all appeared to him now as the direct gift of his Lord who had bidden him "rise." Something analogous happens in the Christian life. The Christian does, in conversion, die to the world and all its passing glory; he does make the great renunciation; yet with his Lord he rises back to that life again, and to the use of that world, yet it is not the same world. He gets it back, but

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not now as a thing that comes between him and the Lord, and the higher life in him, but as his Lord's gift to him, no longer to be a means of separation, in the abuse of it, but of continued and happy fellowship with Him, in the use of it. Thus in the very use of earthly things we can seek the things which are above.

Thus it seems to me that we have in this glimpse of the life of the risen Lazarus a glimpse of the ideal Christian life, as that of a risen life, lived, amidst common earthly surroundings, in fellowship with our risen Lord.

"If, on our daily course, our mind
Be set to hallow all we find,
New treasures still, of countless price,
God will provide for sacrifice.

"We need not bid for cloistered cell,
Our neighbour and our world farewell ;
Nor strive to wind ourselves too high,
For sinful man beneath the sky.

"The trivial round, the common task
Will furnish all we ought to ask ;
Room to deny ourselves, a road
To bring us daily nearer God."

IX

LIFE'S MYSTERIES

“Jesus answered and said unto him, what I do thou knowest not now ; but thou shalt know hereafter.”—JOHN xiii. 7.

THESE words of Jesus, however narrow the application of them by Jesus at the time, have a wide outlook. They may be taken as applying to life as a whole. The postponement of full knowledge is one of the great facts of life. The practical use of what we know is one of the secrets of successful living. Of many a difficulty it may be said, *Solvitur in ambulando* : it is solved by action.

And, firstly, we may apply the words as applied by the Lord Himself to that evidently symbolic act of His, the washing of the disciples' feet. In that act was symbolised the whole mystery of His redeeming love in the humiliation of Himself, in His taking upon Himself the form of a servant, in His humbling of Himself and becoming obedient even unto death, and that the death of the cross. Peter did not understand the meaning of our

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Lord's action. It was a mystery to him, and because of the mystery of it—not only the unmeaningness of it to him, but its very unsuitableness, and its contradiction to the dignity of Jesus as Lord—he refused to accept it. He would not accept the Lord's ministry because it seemed to come to him in an altogether unsuitable, contradictory, and unaccustomed way. He would have refused the ministry because of its mystery to him. Our Lord wisely said to him in the words of our text: act now, submit to my ministry, and leave the explanation, in full at least, till afterwards. Peter, like many of us, would become theologically a full-grown man before becoming a little child in obedience and action. We are not saved by understanding all mysteries; we are saved by becoming little children, by humility, and obedience, and loving submission, and trust. How many stand outside the door of Christ's discipleship because they do not, and as they think cannot, understand all the mystery of the why and the how of redemption, of the Incarnation, of the Cross. They are like children standing outside the school door and refusing to enter because they have not attained to ripe scholarship. They would be M.A.'s before they are learners. We enter the school of Christ to be His disciples, not *because* we know but *in order to* know. We are not asked to know and understand all about the how of the Incarnation, or of the Cross of Jesus our Lord, before trusting ourselves to His

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grace, and love, and lordship. It was repellent to Peter that his Master should wash his feet ; it seemed an entire reversal of the proprieties, and so he refused acceptance. It was apparent humility on his part but real pride. He put his own judgment before that of his Master—he assumed the role of judge—he assumed that he was a better judge than his Master of what was right and proper. He would dictate to the Lord what form his service should take. How many there are who still take to criticising the presentation of Christian doctrine, or rather the way in which Christ's service to men comes to them. They reject the Gospel because at certain points it seems to them to contradict likelihood and propriety. They put the explanation of the facts before the facts themselves. And perhaps we who preach, instead of helping such in their initial difficulties only add to them. We present explanation of facts instead of the facts themselves—our own theories about them instead of allowing the facts to explain themselves. The seeming dogmatism of the early preachers and apostles is the dogmatism not of men propounding theories, but of men presenting facts—a very different kind of dogmatism. They were witnesses, not philosophers. They preached the Incarnation, the Atonement, and the Resurrection as facts, and offered no exhaustive explanation of them ; indeed they style them mysteries—great facts whose full explanation was for the time being at least beyond

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them or even beyond other intelligences ; " Which things," says Peter, " the angels desire to look into." It is not an understanding of, but an acceptance of, and a submission to, those great facts that the Gospel asks.

And it is only in the acceptance, and the use of them, and the application of them to our own need that we reach to any understanding of them even in measure. In all acquisition of knowledge, as in all healing, there must be an element of trust—shall we say of experiment? If I as an invalid come to a physician for treatment, I must submit myself to his treatment. I can only prove the efficacy of his remedies by the taking and the use of them. We must have a trust in the *here-after*. We do not in these circumstances refuse to accept the remedy, or submit to the treatment, till we know all the ingredients of the first and understand the anatomical theory of the second. Enough that we submit in the faith that the after result will conclusively prove the physician's knowledge and the surgeon's skill.

Here are great facts which are held forth as saving. We cannot understand the why of them, nor perhaps very well the how, but we are not called to, as a preliminary to the application of them to our need. Let us take them and apply them to our need—if they fit in they will prove themselves, and in the practical use and application of them we come to learn something both of the how and the why. In any case we will be able

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like the man born blind to say, "One thing I know that whereas I was blind now I see." Faith is not clear vision ; faith is trust, submission ; faith is the experimental testing of truth, of fact, leaving the full understanding and vision for the hereafter. "We know in part, and we prophecy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." "For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face : now I know in part, but then shall I know even as I am known."

Our part here is humbly and trustfully to submit ourselves to our Lord's leadings and dealings, acting obedience where we cannot fully understand, trusting where we cannot see, ever having faith in our Lord's hereafter either in time or in eternity. Enough for me now that His humiliation and His Cross have opened the kingdom of heaven to such as me. In the great hereafter we shall perhaps know fully how. Till then I can trust, obey, and watch and wait.

The second great mystery is that of the Divine Providence. Men—saints and sages, and commonplace people—have in all ages wrestled with this mystery. Have they yet got any satisfactory answer? "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" What problems assail us on all hands—the problem of sin, and sorrow, and suffering—the problem of early and premature death—the problem of sudden and dire calamity.

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Can you even approximate the solution of these without a hereafter? You may perhaps if you are content to fall into utter pessimism and fatalism ; but even then you will find rays of light shot here and there across the gloom, which if you be inclined to pessimism will raise doubts as to your dark conclusions.

On the other hand, is not a lightly begotten optimism often belied by the stern truth of the facts of life? Those things we have mentioned are here seemingly to stay—sin, sorrow, calamity, suffering, death. The truth is that a pessimism or an optimism begotten of a purely present view of things is untrue to fact. It is neither all dark nor all light in this present system of things. The one question is, which is to prevail, the darkness or the light, the evil or the good. It is here that Christian faith and hope enter and turn darkness into light with the assurance that a day of full light without a cloud is coming, when sorrow and sighing shall flee away ; and when all life's seemingly insoluble problems will be understood. What minister in the course of his ministry but has met with cases for which he had no explanation for himself or for others, ones which struck him blind and dumb, and had recourse only to the words of our Lord either for his own or others comfort, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." There are cases in regard to which sheer resignation is the only comfort—resignation

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mingled with that specially Christian faith and trust in God's Fatherly wisdom and love. Sheer resignation by itself—stoicism—is but poor comfort, indeed it is only another form of fatalism, if it is divorced from filial trust in God's love, and goodness, and an hereafter, in which all will be made plain ; but given this last, then resignation becomes not only a duty but a comfort, not to say a joy. It is doubtful if it be wise to theorise about the reasons and explanations of our own or others calamities and losses—that was the mistake of both Job's friends and Job himself. The book of Job leaves the problem of suffering—innocent suffering—unsolved, save in part, and in this some have complained of its inconclusiveness, except so far as explained in the prologue. But in this inconclusiveness it is meant to justify the ways of God with man : that now no one can at times explain their full reason—that awaits a hereafter. The reasons and explanations of life's happenings are beyond our time.

The one great result of earth's mysteries should be to make us both resigned and hopeful—resigned in the faith and truth of the love and wisdom of our God ; hopeful in the hope of God's sure hereafter. Is there any bereaved and puzzled heart here this morning Peter-like, inclined to resent and rebel against the Lord's strange and to them altogether non-understandable dealings with them or theirs? Let them take to heart our Lord's words to Peter, "What I do thou

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knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." Here we are amidst clouds and darkness, surrounded on all sides by forces that seem at times to be left to work their will without a higher will to guide—tossed about on the wild currents of this world, encased in a steel casket of circumstances, like that mad fool who the other day cast himself down in his steel barrel upon the waters of Niagara, and escaped barely with his life. But are we really helplessly and hopelessly adrift if so be we meet the Lord? By no means. There is a hand that guides, and though we cannot unravel the mystery of our Lord's dealings we can trust and wait with patience till the day break and the shadows flee away. *What we know not now we shall know hereafter.* God knows now: we shall know then.

"I'm a pilgrim and a stranger,
Rough and thorny is the road !
Often in the midst of danger ;
But it leads to God !
Clouds and darkness oft distress me,
Great and many are my foes ;
Anxious cares and thoughts oppress me,
But my Father knows.

"Yes He sees and knows me daily,
Watches over me in love ;
Sends me help when foes assail me,
Bids me look above.
Soon my journey will be ended,
Life is drawing to a close ;
I shall then be well attended,
This my Father knows.

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"I shall then with joy behold Him,
Face to face my Father see ;
Fall in rapture and adore Him,
For His love to me.
Nothing more shall then distress me,
In the land of sweet repose :
Jesus stands engaged to bless me,
This my Father knows."

God knows *now* : we shall know *hereafter*.
AMEN.

X

THE UNCHANGING SAVIOUR

“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever.”—HEB. xiii. 8.

THIS verse stands by itself, a sort of meditation or soliloquy on the writer's part. The whole Epistle is taken up with a contrast between the passing and the permanent—Christ in His person and work occupying the permanent place amidst all the changing institutions and opinions of men. We have in this chapter three abiding things given us—love, Jesus Christ, heaven; Jesus Christ still the centre from which the other two obtain their abiding character. In the immediately preceding verse he had written of the teachers who had seemingly passed away, but whose example he would have them imitate, and whose faith he would have them follow. Then comes this verse—the abiding and unchanging character of Jesus Christ, in the past—yesterday, in the present, to-day, with him and those to whom he was writing as with those who had passed away—

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then he pauses as it were, and looking still beyond into the ages to be, the eternities, he adds, "and unto the ages, forever."

This Epistle was written in a time of rapid and momentous changes, when the air was thick with the dust of falling faiths and crumbling creeds and customs. Such times, though inevitable and needful, have their dangers. The scaffolding within which the structure of essential truth has been upheld and built may be confounded with the building. Some may fear that the fall of the scaffold may involve the ruin of the permanent structure; others may in taking down the scaffolding carry part at least of the building away with it. Such times need wise guiding and clear distinction between the passing and the permanent. This Epistle was meant for such a time—to strengthen hold on the true and lasting, and its distinctions and counsels are still needed; for we too have fallen on an age of transition—of rapid and sometimes startling changes—in State, in Church, in social life. The poet's words hold true:—

"The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
And God fulfils Himself in many ways,
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world."

Our text is one for every age. We have in it these three things: Christ the abiding centre of the Church's *life*, its *doctrine*, its *hope*.

Christ is the abiding centre of the Church's

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life. Men have ever been prone to build upon men. Thus we sometimes hear much of apostolic tradition and apostolic succession, whatever that may mean, and the permanency of the Church's life is placed in her possessing such. And some there are who go the length of unchurching all who, they deem, do not possess this qualification however Christ-like they may be otherwise. This dependence of men upon men may take several forms, and be found among Presbyterian and other bodies as well as among High Church Episcopalians or Roman Catholics. There are several ways of unchurching others and counting them non-Christians. Now the Church's life does not depend on any order of men, or any kind of external Church order. All our orders might vanish to-morrow and yet the Church of Christ would live, because dependent for its true and permanent life on Jesus Christ alone. Indeed to the thoughtful there seem at times to appear signs of the breaking up and disappearing of much of our present Church order. The line of demarcation between the various churches and bodies are becoming less distinct every day, and there are many good Christian men and women who stand outside our Church organisation altogether. The truth is that the life of Christ refuses to be walled in within walls of man's erection. Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty. Leaders may die or lose their authority. Church organisations may fail to

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impress men, or may vanish altogether along with other things that pass, but as long as Jesus Christ our Lord lives and reigns, not only above on the heavenly throne, but on earth in the hearts and ways of men, the Church of Christ will live also. Christ is the Church's life, His Spirit her inspiration. As to the place of the Church's rulers in her life the balance of the seventh verse is remarkable. These rulers are to have their place but it is not Christ's place. They are to be valued and followed and obeyed, but only in the measure in which they have possessed and exhibited the life and mind of Christ. He is to remain ever supreme, and His law is always to be the final one. These men were and are what they are by the grace and life of Jesus Christ, who ever abides the source of life and authority whilst men and their authority pass away.

“Why, all the Saints and Sages who discussed
Of the Two worlds so learnedly, are thrust
Like foolish prophets forth ; their words to scorn
Are scattered, and their mouths are stopt with dust.”

Christ is the abiding centre of the Church's *doctrine*. The unchangeableness of Christ calls up in contrast the variety of human doctrines. “The faith of the Christian is in a Person and not in doctrines about him” (Westcott). The age of the writer to the Hebrews was not singular in having “divers and strange teachings.” The opinions and speculations of men are just as

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variable as their customs and ways. They lack at times a common centre; and even the centres which men choose for thought to revolve round are continually changing. There is a fashion in thought, or perhaps we should rather say opinion, as in other things, and the fashion of this world's thought, like that of all earthly things, passeth away. Even within the Church itself there is, and we must say there must be, change of thought as change of outward form and institution. It is not the denial of liberty of thought within the Church that is meant by the affirmation of the unchangeableness of Jesus Christ, but the giving to that thought a centre, and that a living and personal one. The living, reigning Christ is the centre of the Church's thought and teaching as it is of her true life. This is liberty not bondage. A Church may change her statement of doctrine—her method of presenting truth—without being disloyal to Christ, nay she may do so in truest loyalty to Him who is the truth. She may have come to ascertain more of His mind and apprehend His will and purposes more perfectly than hitherto, and so be called upon to give new expression to her thought and teaching. A Church is not for ever bound to her creed though she is so to Christ her head. She may be called to adapt that creed not merely to the changed times in which she lives, but to her fuller knowledge of her Master's mind. That change of her confession may be thus not an act of disloyalty to Christ, but an act

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of truest loyalty—a confession that whilst she must ever remain fallible, and her expression of belief partake of the same character, Jesus Christ her Lord ever remains to her the one infallible authority, and His person her supreme object of regard and love. He is her Lord, and she worships and obeys Him alone. Whilst thus valuing a Church's creed as the expression for the time being of her views of truth, we must ever remember that Christ goes before creed. And attachment to His person and obedience to His laws, and the possession and manifestation of His Spirit, are ever the tests of true discipleship and Christianity. Opinions do not decide Christianity. Character and conduct do. The testing question for each one of us is not what think ye of the Church? or what think ye of the Church's creed? but what think ye of Christ? Opinions may change. Statements of doctrine may change. Even man-made creeds may disappear, but Christ remains the one supreme object of faith and love and hope.

Christ is the abiding centre of the Church's *hope*. The writer of these words looked as he wrote the last of them out into the Church's and the world's future—into the coming ages—away out into infinity, but he could find no bounds to this unchangeableness of Jesus Christ. "Yea," he adds, "and to the ages—forever." The Church's future, as the world's future, belongs to Jesus Christ. He is the "eternal Christ." The Apostle

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could not tell as he thus looked into the ages to come what these ages contained. Nor did that thought trouble him. Christ was there in those ages as in past and present, and that was enough. So far the prospect as regarded the earthly history of the Church and the world with the possibility and probability of change, he would if in modern days, have sung with the Laureate :—

“ Ring out the old, ring in the new,
Ring, happy bells across the snow :
The year is going, let him go ;
Ring out the false, ring in the true.

“ Ring out false pride in place and blood,
The civic slander and the spite ;
Ring in the love of truth and right,
Ring in the common love of good.

“ Ring out old shapes of foul disease ;
Ring out the narrowing lust of gold ;
Ring out the thousand wars of old,
Ring in the thousand years of peace.

“ Ring in the valiant man and free,
The larger heart, the kindlier hand ;
Ring out the darkness of the land,
RING IN THE CHRIST THAT IS TO BE.”

And looking across all the bounds of time, across the dark parting river, it is the abiding Christ that makes the beyond a heaven and a home to us. There love abides because Christ abides, and there reigns immortality because Christ reigns who has abolished death. To be with Christ and

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like Christ that is heaven. For Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and to-day, yea, and forever, the Church's life, and theme, and hope, both for time and for eternity.

And here is a thought for the New Year—the unchanging Christ. Times change, we ourselves change, others change, all things change—customs, opinions, institutions, all—but Jesus Christ changeth never. Let us then again to-day take him as our *life*, our *guide*, our *hope*, for *time*, *forever*.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and to-day, yea, and forever.

“Light of the world ! for ever, ever shining,
There is no change in thee ;
True light of life, all joy and health enshrining,
Thou canst not fade or flee.
Thou hast arisen, but thou descendest never ;
To-day shines as the past ;
All that thou wast thou art, and shalt be ever,
Brightness from first to last.”

H. BONAR.

XI

A CLOUDLESS SUNSET

“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness.”—2 TIM. iv. 8.

ST CHRYSOSTOM has told us how much puzzled he was to account for the hyper-excellent character of Paul's mood and utterance in this passage until he took into account Paul's relation to Timothy. Timothy was seemingly of rather a timid and despondent type of character, and Paul's aim was to hearten him for the battle and the work. It is the case of an old warrior, whose campaigns are all over, instructing and encouraging a young comrade-in-arms. And as he writes to the younger the heart of the older glows as he rehearses, in thought at least, the story of his old battles and victories. But there is added to this the exultation of assured faith. The old campaigner now but awaits the reward of all his battles. We shall notice three things in this utterance of Paul.

I. *The strenuousness of the Christian life.*

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There is no better instance of the liberating effect of the faith of Christ than that of Paul's attitude towards the life of the Gentile world. To an orthodox Jew heathen athletics were an abomination; but with his faith in Christ Paul took an enlarged view of life, and he found in many of the Gentile institutions both simile and stimulus. What seems specially to have attracted Paul was the whole-heartedness and the strenuousness with which Greek and Roman entered into the great athletic contests of both races. In our passage Paul transfers this whole-heartedness, this strenuousness, this persevering patience, with which the ancient heathen pursued their games, to the moral and spiritual sphere. The Christian life is a contest, a race, a thing of earnestness with real issues, and calling for a man's whole energy and endeavour. Elsewhere he exhausts the various points of analogy between the athlete's life and that of the Christian; all illustrative of the strenuousness of the Christian life. Paul is continually on this strain, and this passage shows that this strenuousness was a characteristic not of certain particular periods of the Christian life, but of that life as a whole. This is all the more remarkable because Paul is the great preacher of the grace of God. But in Paul's view God's grace is an energising factor. A study of Paul's Epistles will make this plain. "Work out your own salvation . . . seeing it is God that worketh in you." God works *in*, we are to work *out*. There

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is the whole secret of Paul's own life—the whole genius of Christian life and activity as a whole. No one dwells more than Paul upon the “energising power” of grace within, what he calls the “dynamics” of God, to which he sometimes adds the epithet “mighty,” and even adds “exceeding,” coupling it with “works” and “working,” “energy” and “energising” (Eph. i. 19-29; Col. i. 29), “the power that worketh in us” (Eph. iii. 20). Yet with this inward working, energising, of God, the Apostle always couples a corresponding energy of outward life, exemplified both in the personal and public life. We have already seen this as applied to personal life. Take the two following as applied to public life: “By the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain, *but I laboured more abundantly than they all; yet not I but the grace of God which was with me*” (1 Cor. xv. 10). Whereunto *I also labour, striving according to His working, which worketh in me mightily*” (Col. i. 29). The word “labour” in both verses means to “toil,” and the word “striving” in the second quotation is the same word as used in our text, the technical word for engaging in an athletic contest. Now what is the correspondence between this grace of God—this inner energising of His—and the strenuousness which should characterise the Christian life? The grace of God and the power of God in us, so far from extinguishing personality, or being the substitute for human energy, becomes the inspira-

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tion and stimulating force of both. How is this?

"There is the energy of life." Life, physicists tell us, is a form of motion. Yes, that is the testimony of experience, but physicists cannot tell us whether it is the motion which causes the life, or the life the motion—in other words what is behind motion. Life is a restless thing. Life where it is must manifest itself, must have vent; and the more abundant the life the more abundant the activity. You see it in the young man or beast. They are, when they are not asleep, always on the move. If a child is quiet he is either in sleep or in mischief. Many a wrong lived life is an instance of misdirected energy. The "hooligans" of our town life are an instance of this. When laid hold of by such institutions as that of Barnardo, or our own army, they make good colonists under the one, and good soldiers under the other. So it is with the Christian life, the life of God in the soul. It demands outlet. The man's working *out* becomes proportionate to God's working *in*. And this life is like other life; it can be cultivated, strengthened by care, or it may be suppressed by disuse or misdirected by misuse. "We cannot," said John and Peter, "but speak the things which we have seen and heard." The explanation of this restlessness of life is that all life, holding within its own ideal, ever strives, energises, towards the realisation of its goal, its destined end. So with the Christian life.

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There is the energy of love, or the recognition of indebtedness. Paul felt the constraining power of love, of indebtedness, in two directions. His first endeavour was to discharge his debt Godwards and Christwards. This of course he could never do in adequate measure, hence the strenuousness of his Christian life. Once he was under the burden, the intolerable burden of law, of indebtedness to a holy law, whose demands he could never fulfil. Once he thought he could, but the more he saw of the nature of the law's demands in its spirituality, the more he strove to meet these, the deeper he sunk in despair—the law revived, became a living ideal, Paul died, became a dead failure as we say. Then came his emancipation from law in Jesus Christ. But he lost one burden to take on him another, not less exacting but less irksome, the burden of love. Men, he says, writing to the Corinthians, may at times think me mad in my Christian earnestness and zeal, but the explanation of my to men strangest conduct is the enthusiasm of love. "For the love of Christ constraineth us, for we thus judge" (2 Cor. v. 13). He saw a great purpose of love in God's laying hold of him in Christ Jesus, and his one grand aim now was to lay hold on that for which he was laid hold of. Henceforth he reached forth, straining all his energies to reach God's goal for him in his calling in Christ Jesus. The more of God that Paul found in his life and heart's experience, the more was he constrained to live and labour for

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God and God's purposes in him and for him. Hence his strenuousness.

His next endeavour was to discharge his debt manwards. Next to being God's debtor, Paul felt himself to be debtor to all his fellow-men. "I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise. So as much as in me is I am ready to preach the Gospel to you that are at Rome also" (Rom. i. 14-15). Paul felt that he had a great trust from God, a trust for behoof of the world, and his life's endeavour was to faithfully discharge the duties of the trust. He literally "toiled" in the service of the Gospel for his fellow-men.

"Necessity is laid upon me, yea woe unto me if I preach not the Gospel! For if I do this thing willingly I have a reward; but if against my will a dispensation of the Gospel is committed unto me" (1 Cor. ix. 16; 1 Tim. i. 11). In 1 Tim. i. 11, he speaks of "the Gospel of the glory of the blessed God *which was committed to my trust.*" And in 1 Thes. ii. 4, he speaks of himself as "*put in trust with the Gospel.*"

Do we as ministers of this Gospel, do we as individuals in possession and enjoyment of this Gospel, view it as *a great trust* to be ministered to others? Are we like Paul debtors to all men to make known to them the Gospel? If we do not take Paul's view of this our indebtedness, no wonder we are so far away from his strenuousness, his toil in the making of the Gospel known to all

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men. Are we taking Paul's view of the Christian life? Is it to us as to him a strenuous thing, a life demanding and getting from us whole-heartedness, endeavour, patience, and prayer?

II. If so, then to us as to him will come *the triumph of it*.

"I have fought—I have finished—I have kept." It is a mistake to think that the Christian life is that of strenuousness without attainment, without victory. Not only is the sound of battle all through the New Testament, especially in Paul's writings; there is also ever and anon the shout of victory. And all through it is the certain and strengthening hope of final triumph—there is what one has well called the "optimism" of the New Testament—despair, as defeat, are in it unknown and unmentioned. The note of hope runs all through it, and occasionally the shout of victory rises loud and clear above all its struggles and its strivings, its strain of contest and din of battle. Here in our text we have not so much the shout of a victory by the way as the quiet assurance of the warrior, who has struggled through a long and arduous campaign, and has arrived at final victory, his battles all over. He has fought his last fight and he now sits wiping from off his brow the last sweat of battle, but the smile of triumph is on his face. The assurance of faith is one thing; the assurance of attainment is another. The note here is one not of faith, of hope for the future, but that of present achieve-

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ment. This sense of assured victory belongs to those of the strenuous life. We hear much at times of the rest of faith, of that consciousness of victory which should be the believer's possession even at the outset ; but we cannot help thinking at times, but that the strenuousness of the Christian life is being overlooked, and the necessity for the forth-putting of all individual energy ignored. It is to the strenuous that this sense of final and assured triumph really comes—that confirmation in Christian character, that stability of Christian conduct—which can only be the result of real and long contest with adverse forces within and without.

“Life, I repeat, is energy of love,
Divine or human ; exercised in pain,
In strife, and tribulation, and ordained
If so approved and sanctified, to pass
Through shades and silent rest, to endless joy.”

WORDSWORTH.

III. *The rest and reward of the Christian life.*

Paul was a victor waiting to be crowned. I have but time to mark two things here in regard to the rest and the reward.

1. *Their connection with service—faithful service.* The man who works has alone the right to rest. The rest of heaven is the counterpart of the strenuousness of the earthly life. And the rest of heaven is not that of cessation from service, but that of perfect service with perfected faculties, amidst perfect surroundings. The rest of heaven

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is that of perfection. And the reward, the crown, is successor to the Cross—its due. And in this connection it is well to note that it is on God's sense of justice that the Apostle relies; the rewarder is the *righteous* Judge. Works will have their place in the final judgment and apportioning of rewards in Christ's Kingdom. "God," it is said in Hebrews, "is not unrighteous to forget your work and toil of love which ye have showed toward His name in that ye ministered to the saints and do minister" (Heb. vi. 10). All Christian service is voluntary service, a service of love, and hence the most deserving of all of rest and reward. "It is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed" (2 Thes. i. 6-7).

2. *Their being the goal of life's strenuousness.*

The rest and reward are but the consummation of life's strivings. Connect this assurance of the crown with the passage which speaks of the end of Paul's strivings and you will see this. In Phil. iii. 14, he says, "I press toward the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." What is the prize after which Paul strives? "The crown of righteousness." The redeemed in heaven wear crowns of gold, and have harps of gold to accompany their songs; but the gold of these crowns and harps is not physical but spiritual and moral gold—the gold of perfected characters and perfected faculty. The crown of

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righteousness is the reward of the strenuous pursuit of the same—the reward will correspond to the life aim.

And so the sun of Paul's life, after a stormy day, was setting in a cloudless sky, to rise beyond in a land without a cloud or sigh of storm—the goal of Christian service. We too may have this cloudless setting—"and not to me only——"

Lowell was once asked by a friend how it was that Whittier, the Quaker poet, had such a happy old age. "Whittier," said Lowell, "has lived a pure life and has managed as far as one could in this age of doubt to retain his early faith undimmed, and these two things form the secret of his happy old age."

Yes, yes, that is it.

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me in that day, and not to me only but unto all them also that love His appearing." Amen.

